

FLOYD COIT.

FEBRUARY 16, 1917

No. 594

SIX Cents

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

A STRUGGLE FOR FAME;
OR, THE GAMEST BOY IN THE WORLD.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.
AND OTHER STORIES



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A STRUGGLE FOR FAME

—OR—

THE GAMEST BOY IN THE WORLD

FLOYD COLE

SOUTH

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY WHO MEANT TO BE FAMOUS.

"Some day I mean to be famous," said Bob Rider, wagging his head in a determined manner.

Bob was seated on the bank of a small creek, fishing with a home-made rod, and his remarks were addressed to his particular friend, Sam Sumner, who was perched on a stone by his side engaged in the same amusement.

Sam grinned, for the idea that Bob would ever become famous in the sense to which he referred struck him as too funny for anything.

And, in good truth, Bob did not look at that moment like a boy destined to become a shining mark.

He was dressed in a well-worn suit of pepper-and-salt material, rather short at the ankles, which had been patched over and over again.

His curly brown head was covered with a straw thatch which might have adorned a scarecrow to better advantage.

Furthermore, his sunburned feet were bare of shoes and stockings.

In a word, he looked just what he was—a farm boy, pure and simple.

And yet Bob had a soul that soared way above the plodding life of an agriculturist.

His brain throbbed with ambitious projects that furnished the ground work for much castle-building.

He hated plowing, sowing, reaping, and mowing, not because of the hard work they entailed, but because the returns were, in his opinion, not commensurate with the amount of energy they demanded.

Besides, reading and observation had taught him that the most successful people in the world were those who worked with their brains.

Squire Harlow, lawyer, politician and justice of the peace, the most important man in the village, whose soft, white hands showed that they had never been soiled by manual labor, was one of the exhibits Bob used to prove his point.

The squire was a rich man, and everybody in the neighborhood knew that he had made his money out of his head.

Had Mr. Harlow established himself in a big city instead of at Paisley Village, Bob believed he would have become three times as wealthy as he was reputed to be.

Bob's ambitious ideas had been largely fostered by contact with the prosperous-looking summer boarders who came to Paisley and the farmhouses roundabout every year.

Whatever profit came out of the Rider farm, run by Bob's mother, was chiefly contributed by the city visitors during June, July and August.

When Mrs. Rider, soon after becoming a widow, decided to add summer boarders to the farming industry, she named the

place "Sunnyside Cottage," for effect, though it was just a plain, old-fashioned, roomy house, built originally by Bob's grandfather.

She advertised accommodations for thirty-five boarders, and Bob often wondered where she would stow them in the house if such a bunch ever came at one time.

Twenty-five was more like her limit, when a third of them were children, and sometimes she had that number at once. At the time our story opens it was the middle of June.

There were several boarders at the "Sunnyside" already—Mrs. Hamilton, and her daughter Stella, a very pretty and attractive girl, being the most important.

Bob was rather smitten with Stella, but he was grateful to keep that fact to himself.

Sam Sumner, whose folks lived on the adjoining farm, was a frequent visitor at the Rider farm.

One reason for this was that he was Bob's chum; another was his sneaking regard for Polly Eccles, Mrs. Rider's maid-of-all-work.

Sam had come over this afternoon about five o'clock, and he easily persuaded Bob to shake work in the truck patch and go fishing.

The old mill creek, which ran through the Rider farm, was their fishing-ground, and they had been watching their floats without much success for a quarter of an hour when Bob made the remark which opens this chapter.

"How do you expect to get famous, Bob?" asked Sam, with some interest.

Bob cocked his eye up at his companion and said:

"You'll never guess, Sam."

"I s'pose not—that's why I asked you."

"If I tell you will you keep it to yourself?"

"Sure, I will."

"Honor bright?"

"Yes, honor bright."

"I don't want the matter to leak out, for the fellows would never give me any rest on the subject."

"It won't leak out through me. Now, tell me."

"I've written a play, Sam, and I believe it's a corker."

"You've written a play—for the theater?" ejaculated Sam, in astonishment.

"That's right," nodded Bob.

"I don't see how you could do it, though you are the crack writer of the district school. What put the idea into your head?"

"You remember, mother had an actor boarding with us the greater part of last summer?"

"Yes. His name was William Richmond, wasn't it?"

"That was his name. You only saw a little of him because you were away at your uncle's place in Delaware most of the summer."

"What about him? Did he show you how to write a play?"

"Yes, he gave me a whole lot of points after I got the scheme well in my head. It came about in this way: When—hold on, I've got a bite!"

Bob yanked in his line with a silvery-looking, squirming object at the end of it, which he transferred to a patch of grass behind him, rebaited his hook and cast the line into the creek again.

"Go on with your play yarn," said Sam impatiently.

"Soon after Mr. Richmond came to board I was up in his room one day, for he and I had got quite chummy, talking with him about the theater. It was a rainy afternoon and he couldn't go out. He showed me the manuscript part of a play he was studying for the coming season. I asked him if I could read it, and he said I could, but that it would not interest me as much as if it was the whole play. He showed me that it was just his part, the 'heavy' part, as he called it, or villain, with the 'cues' and general 'business.' The cues were the last few words spoken by the performer in the scene with him, if the speech was longer than a short sentence, and the business was the action of the play. I don't suppose you can understand just what I mean, but you would if I had a printed or written play here, for then I could explain the thing to you."

"Well, never mind that. I want to know how you came to write your play."

"Well, Mr. Richmond said he had a whole lot of printed plays, in complete form, in his trunk, and advised me to read one of them instead of his part. He picked one out for me and I read it that evening and was greatly interested in it. I always had a taste for the drama, anyway, but had never seen a printed play till that day. The result was, I wanted to read another. He handed me out a dozen, and I read them with more interest than any book I ever tackled in my life. In fact, I read every play of any account Mr. Richmond had in his trunk."

"How many did he have?"

"About a hundred."

"How could you read a hundred plays in two months?"

"I read about sixty of them in three weeks."

"You did?"

"Yes. They were not long. A few of them had 60 to 80 pages, but most of them ran from 24 to 48 pages."

"Is that all?"

"The shorter plays were old-fashioned pieces not performed any more. The plays performed nowadays are nearly all studied from manuscript and are not printed as formerly. Mr. Richmond explained to me that a new play is read to the actors engaged for it at the theater where the rehearsals are to be held. Then the parts are distributed to them for study. Whoever directs the rehearsals handles the whole manuscript for reference."

"That's the way it's done, is it?"

"Yes. Well, Mr. Richmond told me that there was more money in a successful play than a successful book. That interested me, because I was figuring on writing a book myself, just to try my hand at it, for I had determined to be an author one of these days. I believe I'm cut out for that kind of work."

"I guess you could write a good story, all right; but a play—you're going to let me read the one you've made up, aren't you?"

"I guess so. I told Mr. Richmond one afternoon when he and I were fishing in the creek here that I intended making writing a business. He seemed surprised and asked me what I had done in that line. I told him that I had written a number of short stories for the village paper, and also that I had won the prize for the best essay at the close of the school term. Afterward he read several of the stories and glanced over the essay. He said my writing showed ability and promise. It was then I told him that I thought I'd like to write a play some time during the winter, and asked him if he would give me some points in addition to what I had picked up in the books. He said he would, and one rainy day we went over the matter together. He sketched out a plot, or scenario, as he called it, and divided it into four parts, or acts. He laid out striking situations or climaxes for the first three acts, the most important of which wound up the third act. In fact, he made a complete skeleton play for my instruction—that is, everything but the actual writing of the dialogue—and then told me how each act ought to be written. I filled part of a copybook with notes, so that I wouldn't lose sight of any important particulars. We had other talks on the subject, and when he left for New York he gave me half a dozen of the printed plays for reference."

"It's funny you never told me anything about this matter before," said Sam, hardly knowing whether to feel put out or not. "Well, did you write that play out?"

"I wrote it out roughly, just for practice, and I've got it in my trunk; but that isn't the play that I expect to make something out of."

"Isn't it? Why not? I should think it would be better than any you could get up all by yourself."

"It might be, but I don't mean to use another man's brains in anything I do. If I can't be original from start to finish, so far as it's possible for me to be, I'd better give up the business, for I never could succeed."

At that moment the boys were startled by a succession of girlish screams coming from a field behind them.

CHAPTER II.

THE ACCIDENT AT THE BRIDGE.

Just then Sam got a bite, and while he was hauling in his line Bob sprang to his feet and ran to the fence close by to see what was the matter.

Two girls, whom Bob recognized as Stella Hamilton and Polly Eccles, were running across the field as hard as they could go, and screaming at the top of their voices.

Following them came a big red bull, belonging to the farm, which had broken through from an adjoining field occupied by three cows.

Stella Hamilton carried a red silk sunshade, and that doubtless was what attracted the animal.

Bob sprang on the fence and shouted to the girl to come that way.

Then he jumped into the field, seized one of the top rails and ran toward the frightened girls.

As Bob approached them the girls separated, Polly making a dash for the opposite fence.

"Bob, Bob! Save me, save me!" screamed Stella, dropping her sunshade at last and making a fresh effort to reach the fence which Sam was just climbing over.

The bull, lowering his head, rushed viciously at the fleeing girl.

Bob Rider, dashing forward to her assistance, dexterously shoved the long rail between the animal's forelegs.

The bull went down as if shot, jabbing his head into the red parasol.

"Quick, Miss Stella," cried Bob. "Sam will help you over the fence."

Then he braced himself to head the bull off again if he continued the pursuit.

The animal, however, had no further interest in the girl.

His attention was wholly taken up by the sunshade, which he tossed over his head and followed up for a fresh attack when it came down.

Bob saw that it would be foolish, as well as useless, to attempt to rescue the pretty sunshade from the angry animal.

In fact, its usefulness as a parasol was about over, for already there were two gaping rents in the silk.

So, leaving it to its fate, he threw the rail over his shoulder and ran toward the fence himself.

Stella was on the other side, sitting on the grass, quite exhausted by her terror and hard run.

Bob replaced the rail and joined her, while Sam hurried around the field to meet Polly Eccles on the other side.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear! I never was so frightened in all my life before!" panted Miss Hamilton. "If you hadn't come to my aid, Bob, that animal would have killed me, I know he would."

"If you had thrown away your sunshade at first it would have attracted the bull's attention away from you and given you the chance to get out of the field while he was playing with it."

"I was too scared to think of doing anything except to run as fast as I could," replied Stella. "You're a brave boy to run into the field and face that bull."

"I'd run into the field if there were a dozen bulls there sooner than have you come to harm," said Bob, gallantly.

"Would you, really?" asked the girl, archly.

"I would," answered Bob. "I should consider it my duty. In fact, it is every boy's duty to stand up for a girl in distress."

"Well, I'm very grateful to you for saving me, Bob."

"You're welcome, Miss Stella."

"Thank you, Bob."

"How came you and Polly to be in that field?"

"I knew you and your friend, Sam Sumner, were fishing somewhere along the creek, and I persuaded Polly to come along with me to try and find you. We took a short-cut across the fields, and we had hardly started to cross that one before the bull dashed through a break in the fence on the other side and flew at us. Polly shouted to me to run for my life, and we both fled, screaming as hard as we could."

"Sam and I heard you. I didn't know what was the matter until I reached the fence. Then I grabbed a rail and started for the bull."

"I'm so glad that it's all over. I thought I should faint when I reached the fence and Sam Sumner pulled out a rail and helped me through."

"Come over to the creek. I must get my pole and line if a fish hasn't run off with it."

"How many fish have you caught?" asked the girl, as she accompanied him.

"Sam and I only caught one each."

"Is that all? Aren't there many fish in the creek?"

"Lots of them, but they don't bite as well on a sunny day as they do on a cloudy one."

"Why is that?"

"They probably see a reflection of the pole in the water, and get suspicious of what is in store for them. I can't give you any other reason."

"Let me fish a little while, will you?" asked Stella, eagerly, when Bob found his fishing apparatus just as he had left it.

"It's too late, I guess. It's about time for us to return for supper."

A loud-mouthed bell ringing in the distance proved that Bob was right.

"It's too bad that we didn't come down here earlier," said Stella, regretfully, as she watched Bob roll up his line.

"Maybe Sam and I may come here to-morrow afternoon. If we do we'll bring you with us."

"That will be splendid. You'll let me fish some, won't you?"

"Sure. As long as you want. Come, let us go back."

When they reached the house Bob went to his room and made a complete change in his personal appearance.

When he came downstairs he looked like a different boy altogether.

His face was washed, his hair neatly brushed, and he had on a good suit of clothes, shoes and stockings.

He ate his supper in the kitchen with Polly, and then went to the barn and harnessed one of the horses to the light wagon.

His mother expected a new boarder from New York, and he had to go to the railroad station, three miles beyond the village, for him and his trunk.

He also had to stop at Paisley on his way back and wait for the mail to be sorted so that if there was anything for Sunnyside Cottage he could bring it back with him.

The mail-bag was brought to the village by the driver of the carryall which made two daily trips to and from the station.

Although a small place, Paisley received a heavy mail.

The bulk of the letters, however, were addressed to the Paisley Novelty Co., which advertised extensively in certain publications having a wide circulation, consequently both the morning and afternoon mail-bags carried a large number of registered letters containing various sums of money, as well as letters enclosing postal orders.

Half-way between Paisley and the station was a bridge which crossed a creek.

It was a shabbily-built affair, consisting of two stringers, on which the cross-planks were laid.

When Bob came in sight of this bridge he saw, through the gathering dusk, two men kneeling at one end of the structure apparently examining it.

The sound of his wagon wheels reaching their ears, they rose to their feet and sauntered off down the creek a little way and then stood looking into the water.

Bob wondered a little at their actions, for they seemed to be strangers, and as he drove by the spot where they had been crouching he looked intently at the planks to see what it was that had apparently interested them.

He saw nothing out of the way, and came to the conclusion that one of the men might have dropped something between the cracks and the pair was looking for it.

As he passed the end of the bridge his sharp eye discerned a short, stout crowbar lying on the ground.

Its presence there rather puzzled him, and he could not help connecting it with the two strangers.

Before he reached the station the circumstance slipped from his mind, and as the train was not yet in sight he put in the time talking to the driver of the carryall.

It was now dark, and about the only illumination came from the dimly-lighted station.

In a few minutes the train came in.

Several passengers alighted and the mail-bag was thrown to the driver of the carryall, who tossed another bag into the car in return.

The expected boarder for Sunnyside Cottage failed to show up and so Bob found that he had had his ride for nothing.

He was about starting off when the station agent hailed him.

"Say, Rider, what did you come for—a boarder?"

"Yes," answered Bob; "but he didn't come by the train, according to arrangement."

"Then you're going straight back?"

"Sure."

"Want to earn half a dollar and do a lady a favor by going a mile out of your way?"

"Well, I don't object. Where does the lady want to go?"

"To the Brookside Farm. The people there did not come after her."

"All right," answered the boy.

The agent went back in the waiting-room, and presently returned with a stylishly-dressed woman, carrying a hand-bag.

"This boy will take you over to the Brookside Farm, madam," said the agent.

"Thank you," replied the lady. "It is rather an embarrassing predicament I'm in by the failure of the people to send a conveyance for me."

"I'm sorry that I can't offer you anything better than an open seat, ma'am," said Bob, raising his hat politely.

"I'm thankful to be able to get over to the farm in any way," replied the lady.

Bob then assisted his passenger up on the seat.

"Just give me a lift with the trunk, Rider," said the agent.

Bob helped him land it in the back part of the wagon, and, there being nothing more to detain him, he mounted alongside the lady and drove off up the road leading to the village.

Just beyond the bridge he would have to turn off and drive about a mile up a lonesome road which led past the Brookside Farm.

Bob found that his passenger was not only a handsome woman, but a very vivacious and entertaining talker.

A turn in the road brought them in sight of a swiveling lantern about a quarter of a mile ahead, which Bob knew was suspended from the rear of the carryall.

"Is that a vehicle ahead?" asked the lady.

"Yes. That's the carryall that goes to Paisley. It carries the mail and any passengers bound for the village."

Just at this moment Bob heard the tread of the carryall horse as he stepped upon the bridge over the creek.

The next instant he heard a crash, which was followed by the sudden disappearance of the lantern, shouts and the screams of women.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Bob, touching up his mare. "An accident has happened at the bridge!"

CHAPTER III.

THE LOST MAIL-POUCH.

When Bob drove up to the scene of the accident he found a group of excited persons, of whom three were women and two children, gathered at the end of the bridge.

He dismounted and joined the crowd.

He saw that the end of one of the stringers had apparently slipped off its bed of rock on the shore, and the corner of the bridge had dropped into the water.

When the timber had fallen down, the carryall had been upset, and the side of the vehicle now rested on the bottom of the shallow stream.

Bob was rather surprised at the manner in which the mishap had occurred.

If one of the stringers had broken, or if the planks had been cut in two by the wheels of the carryall, he would not have wondered, for the bridge was not kept in good repair.

But he could not understand how the end of the stringer should be dislodged from its resting place, as it fitted into a kind of niche that ought to have held it quite snugly.

The passengers had all been rescued from their wet and uncomfortable positions, and when Bob came up the driver and two men passengers were busy removing the horse from between the shafts.

The animal had been pulled down on his side, but, being a sober, steady-going piece, he had taken the matter rather philosophically, for he did not struggle nor kick out like some animals would have done under similar circumstances.

At length he was released and led over to the other end of the bridge, where he was tied to a tree.

It did not appear that there had been any more serious casualties than a bump on one of the children's heads from contact with a seat, and a sprained ankle which one of the women had sustained.

The driver welcomed the appearance of Bob with satisfaction, as his young, muscular arms would be of a great assistance in helping to right the carryall.

"Well, we'd better get busy and right the vehicle," he said. "It does not seem to have been injured any by the fall. That is fortunate, as I have several women and two children to take on to the village. We ought to have no great trouble in getting the carryall on its wheels again and hauling it off the bridge, as there are six of us to do the job."

"Six?" replied Bob. "Where are they? I only see four, including myself."

"Why, there are my two men passengers here, and the two men who were walking along the road at the time we upset. They jumped on the seat after the spill and helped me out of the creek."

"That's so?" replied Bob. "They must have gone on, then, and left you all in the lurch."

"That's a funny thing for them to do," answered the driver, in a tone of annoyance. "They appeared to be very anxious to help me out of the water."

Bob thought their conduct was decidedly odd.

He soon found that they had made no attempt to assist anybody but the driver, notwithstanding that they could not help knowing that there were women in the capsized vehicle whose unfortunate predicament should have appealed to their chivalry.

However, there was no doubt but that they had disappeared, and so the driver had to figure on righting the carryall without their aid.

This proved to be no easy job, and took half an hour of the hardest kind of pushing and hauling to accomplish.

At last it was done, and the vehicle was hauled off the bridge.

"Now we'll have to repair the bridge," said Bob.

"Repair the bridge!" replied the driver. "I don't know that that is our business. That job belongs to the county authorities."

"Never mind the county authorities," answered Bob. "I've got to get my team across. I've got a lady passenger bound for the Brookside Farm, and I want to land her at her destination some time to-night."

"Let her get out," said the driver, "and then we'll see if we can't lead your horse and wagon across the bridge as it lies."

"You couldn't get it over without upsetting it. The planks are all displaced at the low end and the mare would fall through. You've got to help me repair the bridge. I helped you right your team, and turn about is fair play."

Neither the driver nor his male passengers cared to undertake the work, much to Bob's disgust and indignation.

The boy kicked vigorously, but it didn't do any good.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the driver of the carryall at last. "I'll take your passenger and her trunk out to the Brookside Farm, seeing that she's in a bad fix. That's the very best I can do under the circumstances. It will make me plaguy late in getting to the village, but I suppose it can't be helped."

Bob agreed to this, as it relieved him of the journey, and the half dollar he had expected to get for the trouble did not cut a great deal of ice with him.

He knew that there was a place a quarter of a mile down the creek where he would be able to cross, but he would have to pass through a small wood to get there.

The only question was whether he'd be able to get through

the wood in the dark with the team without bumping continually against the trees.

Bob returned to his lady passenger and explained the predicament he was in.

"The driver of the carryall has consented to go out of his way and take you and your trunk to Brookside Farm, ma'am," he said, "for there doesn't seem to be any other way for you to get there. I'm sorry that I couldn't carry out my contract to take you to your destination, but these men won't fix the bridge, and so I can't get across the creek at this point."

"How will you get across?" she asked, in a tone of some concern, as if she were greatly interested in her young driver's plight.

"There's a ford a short distance further down the creek. I'll have to drive through that wood to reach it, and I'm not sure I can get through."

"That's too bad," she replied, sympathetically. "I am really sorry to lose your company. You're the most interesting boy I think I ever met."

"Thank you, ma'am, for the compliment."

The lady laughed musically.

"Do you live in the village?" she asked.

"No. My mother owns the Rider Farm, known to summer folks as the Sunnyside Cottage. It's about a mile beyond Paisley."

"Your mother takes boarders, then?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Really, I'm sorry now that I'm not going there," said the lady. "Still, I might make a change in my arrangements right now. Do you think your mother could accommodate me?"

"Oh, yes. We've only got four boarders at present."

"It would serve the Brookside Farm people right to lose me because they failed to meet me at the station. I suppose the carryall would take me as far as the village. Then you could meet me there after you succeeded in getting across the creek."

"I'll do that, ma'am. You can stay at the post-office till I get there, which will probably be in half an hour. The driver will like that much better, for he isn't stuck on going out to the Brookside Farm after the delay he's had here. I'll speak to him about the matter, if you wish me to."

"Do so, if you please," said the lady, apparently delighted with the change she had made in her arrangements.

The women and children had been carried safely over the creek by this time and were seated in the carryall once more.

The horse was hitched in the shafts and all seemed in readiness to proceed.

The driver, however, with his remaining lantern, the rear one having been smashed, and his two male passengers, seemed to be busily hunting for something in the water near the center of the bridge when Bob started to cross the shaky and inclined structure.

"What have you lost?" asked the boy, curiously, of the driver, who was poking about in the bed of the creek with a stick.

"The mail-bag is gone," he replied, in worried tones.

"The mail-bag!" cried Bob.

"Yes, it must have slipped out of the front of the wagon when she upset."

The driver evidently regarded the mail-bag as the most important part of his freight from the station, for he judged that it carried a whole lot of valuable letters addressed to the Paisley Novelty Co., and he was afraid he would get into no end of trouble if he did not recover it.

"Where did you carry it? Under the seat?" asked Bob.

"Yes."

"I shouldn't think it would slip out, unless the wagon turned completely over, which it didn't. The front of the carryall lay higher than the rear, anyway. Are you sure that it didn't slide back into the body of the vehicle?"

"I hunted the wagon all over for it," replied the driver, anxiously. "It got out some way."

"You think it fell into the water, then?"

"There was no other place for it to go."

"Maybe it was carried down the stream a little way?" suggested Bob.

"The funny thing about this matter," spoke up one of the male passengers, "is that all the other bundles, the express matter and such, he had under the seat, are still there. Seems to me that some of them ought to have gone into the creek instead of the mail-pouch, which is a clumsy thing to slide about."

Bob thought so, too; but then he had learned from experience that curious mishaps were always occurring.

The farm lad was decidedly of the opinion that if the pouch had dropped into the creek it must have floated away, since there was no sign of it near the bridge.

To continue the search in the darkness with one lantern seemed a forlorn task.

He suggested as much to the driver, advising him to give up the hunt till daylight.

The two male passengers, who were wet and chilly, and anxious to proceed on their way, backed up Bob.

"What's the use of fooling around here any longer," one of them demanded, impatiently. "My wife and little boy are liable to get their death of cold. Their well-being is of more importance than a measly old mail-pouch that will probably be readily found in the morning somewhere along the creek. It's locked, anyway, so no chance finder will be likely to tamper with the contents."

"I'm afraid there's a pile of money orders and bills in that bag," said the driver, gloomily. "What's to become of me if it's lost?"

"Well, you stand very little show of finding it in the darkness. Take us to the village, and then, if you're afraid to wait till morning, you can get some men to come back with you with several lanterns and you can make a systematic search."

The driver reluctantly concluded to abandon the hunt for the time being, and came out of the water.

"I've got to lose half an hour at least going out to the Brookside Farm," he grumbled.

"You don't have to do that now," said Bob. "The lady has decided to go to our place. All you have to do will be to take her to the post-office. I'll pick her up there later on, when I get across at the ford below."

"I'm glad of that," replied the driver, brightening up. "You'll take her trunk on with you?"

"Yes. I'd take her with me, too, only I'm not sure I can get through the wood. I may have to come back and go three or four miles around to reach the ford."

Bob's passenger, whose name was Mrs. Canfield, was carefully assisted across the demoralized bridge and helped to a place in the carryall.

The driver then mounted his seat and, with a very glum look, started the wagon on its way toward Paisley, while Bob recrossed the bridge, got into his vehicle and turned the mare's head toward the wood.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT BOB DISCOVERED IN THE WOOD.

It was no fool job, as Bob well knew, to guide his wagon through the wood without continually running afoul of the trees.

He wouldn't have attempted it but that he was in a hurry to reach the ford, and was willing to take chances on getting there through the wood.

As soon as he got under the shadow of the trees he found the gloom intense, and proceeded slowly and with great caution.

He collided with a tree several times, but easily worked the wagon free, and had reached the middle of the wood when he suddenly saw a faint light ahead.

"I wonder where that comes from?" Bob asked himself. "I didn't know there was a house here."

As he drew nearer the light his troubles seemed to increase, and finally he found that, turn which way he would, he was practically blocked.

"I'll have to turn around and go back," he said.

When he tried to do that he found he had driven into a kind of cul-de-sac, and could not turn around.

"The only way to get out of this muddle is to back the wagon," he muttered.

To back the wagon successfully in the dark was a feat that got the best of him.

"I'll have to give it up and go to that house where the light is. I shall probably find a man there, and maybe a lantern. I'll ask him to help me out."

So Bob left the mare standing in her tracks and started for the house.

It stood in the midst of a clearing a hundred yards away. It was little better than a shanty, a story and a half high.

"Only there's a light inside, I'd almost be willing to

swear that nobody lived there," breathed Bob, as he approached the door with the intention of knocking. "It looks lonesome and deserted, and the last place in the world that anybody but a tramp would care to inhabit."

As the thought of tramps occurred to Bob's mind it struck him that he had better go slow.

"I'll look in the window first before knocking. There might be a tramp or two inside, and finding I was alone in this out-of-the-way place they might knock me out and steal off with my rig. It's always well to be prudent."

With that conviction Bob moved away from the door and walked to the window through which the light shone.

It was just the right height from the ground to enable him to look through with ease.

One of the bottom panes was missing, while the others were cracked and dirty.

Bob put his face up to the opening and looked inside.

What he saw rather staggered him.

On a plain deal table in the middle of the room was a big pile of letters, while on the floor close by lay a leather mail-pouch with a great, gaping slit in its side.

Two men, resembling in general appearance the pair Bob had seen kneeling at the end of the bridge when he was on his way to the railroad station, were opening the envelopes and dumping their contents on a clear spot on the table.

Already a considerable amount in loose silver and bills was in evidence.

Bob gave a gasp.

"These chaps got away with the missing mail-bag from the carry all," he breathed. "There isn't the least doubt about that fact, for there is the pouch on the floor and its contents is on the table. I begin to see through the whole scheme. Those chaps must have learned that the Paisley Novelty Co. receive a heavy mail every afternoon, and they determined to get possession of the mail-bag and rifle it of the money it contained. Finding out that the driver of the carryall carried the bag from the station to the village they decided to upset the wagon on its way back. The bridge across the creek seemed to be a good point at which to effect their purpose. They saw it was a rickety affair and so they dislodged the stringer in such a way that it would go down as soon as the weight of the vehicle came upon it. As soon as the accident happened as they had planned it they rushed up, and while one made a bluff of helping the driver out of the creek, no doubt leading him away from the front of the wagon, the other fellow grabbed the mail-bag and made off with it under cover of the darkness. Yes, it's as plain as daylight. Then they came together and walked into this wood to divide their plunder. Probably they knew of the existence of this shanty. No doubt they've been staying here while making their arrangements to work the robberv. Well, if they haven't a nerve to rob the United States mail! That's a pretty serious offence. Now that I'm on to the game, it's up to me to put a spoke in their wheel if I can. The question is, how am I going to do it? There are two of them, both stout fellows, and probably armed. It would be likely to go hard with me if I made a rash move. It's a mighty good thing that I thought twice before knocking at that door."

Bob watched them go through the registered mail.

When they finished with that, one of them began to count the money.

"Five hundred and ten dollars and fifteen cents," he said. "Not so bad, Bill."

"You kin bet not. I didn't expect we'd get so much," replied Bill.

"I dare say these other letters contain twice that much in money orders," replied his companion. "Too bad they're useless to us."

"We'd better open all the letters addressed to the Novelty Company. Some people are foolish enough to send money at their own risk to save a few cents in Government fees."

The other nodded, and they started in on the rest of the letters, talking together as they proceeded.

They found a \$2 bill and some silver pieces, together with about twenty money orders in the other letters.

"These other letters addressed to outside people aren't worth bothering with, I guess," said the man, whom Bill called Dick.

"I guess you're right," said Bill, picking up the pouch. "Shove all that stuff back into the bag and we'll drop it into the creek in the mornin'."

Dick pushed the empty envelopes, letters of instructions, money orders, and the unopened missives into the bag, and Bill tossed it into a corner of the room.

"Five hundred and twelve dollars and eighty cents divided in two makes \$256.40 apiece," said Dick.

He counted out that sum and pushed it toward his companion.

The remainder he put in his own pocket.

"This was the easiest job we ever done," he said, with a laugh. "That bridge must have been built on purpose for us. It was such a simple matter to work that stringer out of its socket with a hand-crowbar. Then the carryall rolled right into the trap, dumped the driver and the passengers into shallow water, and upset the horse. The rest was easy to two such experienced chaps like us. Everybody was excited, and even the driver had no thoughts for the mail-pouch at that moment, so you had no difficulty in walking off with it in the darkness."

"Yes, it was dead easy," grinned Bill. "Just like finding money."

"We'll take a drink and turn in now. We want to get away on an early train."

Each produced a pocket-flask which contained a liquor resembling whiskey.

They finished what was in the flasks and chucked them after the mail-pouch.

Then, after arranging an old mattress that lay in another corner, they blew out the candle and went to rest.

"They're going to stay here all night, evidently," said Bob, drawing away from the window. "The only thing I see that I can do is to try and get back to the village as soon as I can and send the constables over here to capture them."

He returned to his wagon and tried his luck again at backing the rig out of the predicament into which he had run it.

He succeeded in backing it far enough to find an opening in the trees sufficiently wide to get through.

This time he did not attempt to drive the mare, but led her in and out through the wood till he got out altogether close to the ford.

Then he got up on the seat and drove across the creek and thence on toward the village.

The Paisley Novelty Company's manufactory was on the outskirts of the village in that direction, and Bob found that he would pass close to it.

There was a light burning in the office, so he stopped in front of the door and pounded on it.

A window was presently opened and the watchman's head appeared.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"Bob Rider."

"What do you want?"

"Have you telephone connection with the home of any of the officers?"

"There's a direct wire to the president's house. Why do you ask?"

"Could I call him up? I've got a matter of great importance to communicate to him."

"Why don't you drive on to his house?"

"Don't know where he lives."

"You know where Maple Street is, don't you?"

"Yes."

"You go up Maple Street as far as Lincoln Green. It's the second house from the corner facing the Green."

"That's some distance out of my way. It would be much easier to telephone. Call up his house and see if he's in."

"Where do you live?"

"On the Rider Farm, also known as Sunnyside Cottage, one mile outside the village. My mother owns the place."

"All right. I'll let you in."

Two minutes later Bob had the president of the company on the wire.

After explaining who he was, the boy told the president how the carryall had been upset by the dropping of one end of the creek bridge that evening.

Bob then went on to tell how the mail-pouch had been discovered to be missing when the driver was ready to continue on to the village.

"Is that so?" replied the president, in a tone that showed he had suddenly become deeply interested in the conversation. "Hasn't it been recovered?"

"No, sir; but I have found out where it is," answered Bob.

"Where is it?"

"In an old shanty in the wood across the creek."

"Why, how came it to get there?"

"It was stolen by two men, who were the cause of the bridge breaking down."

"How do you know all this?" asked the president.

Bob explained about his trip through the wood to get to the ford; how he had seen a light in the shanty and looked through a window on the ground floor to see who was in the building; how he had seen the rifled mail-pouch and a pile of letters on the table which the men were cutting open and pulling out their contents; how they had finally divided the proceeds of the robbery, which amounted to little over \$500, and had then turned in on the mattress for the night.

"If you send the constable over to that house with two or three men at his back he ought to have no difficulty in catching the rascals. They have the money in their pockets. The money orders are all in the cut mail-pouch, with the rest of the mail matter. The constable ought to be able to save everything."

The president thanked Bob for his information, and assured him that the company would not overlook his services.

"I'll make arrangements at once for the capture of the two robbers," he concluded. "You will hear from me later. Good-night."

Bob hung up the receiver and started for the post-office, where he found Mrs. Canfield impatiently waiting for him to appear.

The postmaster was in a sweat over the missing mail-pouch.

"Did the driver go back to look for it in the creek?" asked Bob.

"He did, and took several men to help him."

"They'll have their trouble for nothing, because the bag isn't in the creek."

"How do you know it isn't?" asked the postmaster, eying Bob curiously.

"Because I happen to know where it is."

"Where is it?"

"I've told the president of the Novelty Company where it is and he's going to see that it's recovered at once."

"What has Mr. Golding got to do with the mail-pouch? I am the postmaster and I request that you'll tell me so that I can send for it."

"Owing to the circumstances surrounding the case, it's better that Mr. Golding should act in the matter. He's more interested than anyone else, because there's over \$500 in cash in the registered letters and probably more than that in money orders."

"How do you know that there's more than \$500 in the registered letters?" asked the postmaster, sharply. "Nobody but the sender and receiver is supposed to know the contents of a registered letter."

"Because the man who opened the letters said there was something more than \$500 in them in cash."

At those words the postmaster nearly had a fit.

"Do you mean to say that the missing mail-pouch has been tampered with?"

"I do. The bag was not lost by the upsetting of the carryall at the bridge, but was stolen by two men who caused the accident to get possession of it."

The postmaster nearly jumped a foot.

"How came you to know that the bag was stolen, Rider?"

"Oh, I haven't time now to tell you all I know about the matter, because I've got to take Mrs. Canfield over to the farm, but you'll learn in good time."

At that moment Mr. Golding and the constable of the village entered the post-office together.

"Here is Bob Rider now, Mr. Golding," said the constable.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Rider," said the president of the Novelty Company. "I've started in to act on the information you furnished me over the telephone in relation to the robbery of the mail-pouch."

"Glad to hear it, sir. I don't think there is anything more that I can tell you. You know about as much as I do on the subject now."

"Well, you sha'n't lose anything by your fortunate discovery, my boy. Mr. Jones," turning to the postmaster. "Lock up your store and come with us. We are going to recover the stolen mail-bag, and it's your duty as the postmaster to take charge of it as soon as you can get your hands on it."

"Come, Mrs. Canfield," said Bob. "We'll go on to the farm now. You've had quite a time of it to-night trying to reach your destination."

On the way to the farm he told the story of his night's experience to his fair passenger, and she was greatly astonished by his story.

Mrs. Rider, who was wondering greatly over her son's

lengthly absence, was also surprised to see a lady instead of the gentleman boarder she expected.

She welcomed Mrs. Canfield, however, and provided her with a cup of tea and some cold meat and bread.

And while the new boarder was eating and explaining how she came to change her destination from the Brookside Farm to the Sunnyside Cottage, Bob went to bed.

CHAPTER V.

BOB OUTLINES THE PRINCIPAL SITUATION IN HIS PLAY.

Next morning one of the constable's deputies rode out to the Rider Farm to tell Bob that he must appear at Justice Harlow's office at ten o'clock and give his testimony against the two mail-pouch robbers who had been captured the night before through the information furnished by him the president of the Raisley Novelty Co.

"All right," said Bob. "Wait till I change my clothes and I'll go with you."

The news of the mail robbery and the capture of the rascals was soon circulated through the village, consequently Lawyer Harlow's office was crowded with inquisitive people, who overflowed on the sidewalk outside when no more could find entrance at the hour set for the examination of the prisoners.

The damaged mail-pouch, the rifled envelopes and their contents, including the money taken from the pockets of the prisoners at the time of their arrest, were displayed on the justice's desk as exhibits in the case.

After the driver of the carryall had described the accident which had happened to his vehicle, and had identified one of the prisoners as the man who had assisted him out of the creek, Bob took the witness chair and told his story as the reader knows it.

The prisoners listened to his story in great surprise, and when he had concluded they cast very black looks at him, for his evidence, backed up by the exhibits, was strong enough to convict them in court.

The justice, of course, remanded the prisoners to the county jail for detention, until they were taken charge of by the United States authorities, whose business it was to proceed against them in a Federal Court.

Bob was complimented by Justice Harlow, and afterward by many of the villagers, for the part he had taken in the matter.

Subsequently Mr. Golding, in behalf of the Novelty Company, presented him with a reward of \$250, as an evidence of their appreciation of his services.

In due time Bob was summoned by the Government to appear in court as the star witness against the two mail robbers, and they were easily convicted on his testimony.

Shortly after they had been sent to the penitentiary Bob received a reward of \$500 from the Post-office Department and a complimentary letter with the autograph of the post-master-general attached.

To resume the thread of our story, Bob returned to the farm after the examination of the mail robbers in Justice Harlow's office, and took up his regular duties where he had left off.

His work was not very laborious, as he did not go in the fields.

He looked after the truck patch, which supplied the boarders with fresh vegetables, attended to matters around the yard and the various outbuildings, and did the chores about the house, sometimes helping Polly when the house was full of boarders and the girl was overworked.

He also took the visitors carriage driving at times, and carried them and their baggage to and from the railroad station.

In spite of the many duties he had to perform he could always find time to amuse himself when he felt so disposed, for his mother was not exacting in her demands on his service.

He and Stella Hamilton had got upon a quite a friendly footing, and this feeling was intensified on her part by Bob's conduct the previous afternoon in saving her from the vicious attentions of the bull.

Both she and her mother felt very grateful to him, and showed it by admitting him to a more intimate relationship.

"Well, are you going to take me fishing with you this afternoon?" asked Stella, when she met him in the yard about four o'clock.

"Sure thing. I expect Sam over about five, and then the three of us will go to the creek," he replied.

"That will be fun," she answered, with sparkling eyes. "By the way, do you know that lady, Mrs. Canfield, you brought here last night is an actress?"

"No," replied Bob, opening his eyes. "Is she?"

"Yes. I guess she's a good one, too, for she said she was out last season with one of Broughman's companies."

"We had a fine actor here last summer named William Richmond. You might ask her if she knows him."

"I will. Now, don't forget to let me know when you and Sam Sumner are ready to go to the creek. You'll find me on the front veranda."

"All right," said Bob, and then Stella walked away.

Sam turned up at a quarter to five.

When they appeared in the front of the house with their fishing tackle, Stella was talking to Mrs. Canfield.

When the actress found that her companion was going fishing with the boys she wanted to go along.

"The more the merrier," laughed Bob. "Go and get your hats."

When the party reached the fishing ground, Bob baited his hooks and handed the pole to Stella.

Sam did the same for Mrs. Canfield.

"When are you going to show me that play you wrote?" asked Sam, after they had been at the creek for perhaps a quarter of an hour.

Mrs. Canfield turned around and looked at Bob with some curiosity.

"Have you written a play?" she inquired.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the boy, modestly.

"What kind of play is it? You must let me see it. I am connected with the profession, and will be able to pass upon its merits."

"It's a melodrama in four acts, ma'am, and is called 'The Red Light.'"

"'The Red Light'?"

"Yes. You see, the principal scene is a lighthouse off the coast. It has revolving red and white lights. When the lighthouse people need urgent help from the shore they stop the light so that it throws the red beams toward the village. That signal is well known to all the fishermen and villagers. Well, ma'am, in the third act, which is the main act of the play, the villain entices the heroine to the lighthouse by means of a decoy note, supposed to be written by the hero, with whom she's in love, and who is keeper of the lighthouse. She gets one of the village boatmen to take her out in his boat. The villain, in the meantime, with the help of the second villain, has overpowered the hero and his assistant and locked them up in the oil-room of the lighthouse. So, when the heroine appears he tells her that she is in his power and must consent to marry him. She refuses, of course. He then tells her that her lover and his assistant are locked in the oil-room. He shows her where he has staved in a cask of the oil, a portion of which is seen in a pool around the door. He threatens to set fire to the oil, which will then communicate with the rest of the barrels in the room, and thus bring about the death of the imprisoned man, if she does not marry him. In the struggle which takes place between them she knocks the lantern out of his hand, extinguishing the light, and rushes up the steps to the room under the lantern, where the revolving machinery is. Here she stops the light so that it throws a steady gleam shoreward, the signal of distress. That gives the title to the drama, for help comes in the shape of the comedian and the soubrette, who smash in the door of the oil-room, letting the hero and his man out of their dangerous situation. In the meantime, the villain has chased the heroine to the top of the lighthouse. She runs out on the gallery, where he traps her. To escape from him she climbs out on the iron projecting arm to which the fog-bell is suspended. He follows her out and she slides down the bell-rope as far as she can go. Then he pulls out a knife and tells her he will cut the rope and send her into the sea to her death unless she consents to marry him. She refuses to yield, and as he is about to cut the rope the hero appears and saves her. That's the end of the act."

The actress, Stella, and Sam listened with great interest to Bob's description of the chief scene of his play.

"Gee! That's fine!" cried Sam, when his friend had concluded. "I'd like to see that on the stage. I'll bet it's thrilling."

"It's a very good situation," admitted Mrs. Canfield. "I must read the whole play, in order to judge if the rest of

it is as good in proportion. If it needs improvement, and I can help you in any way, I'll be glad to do so."

"Thank you, ma'am. I've no doubt you will be able to point out the defects which I will then be able to rectify."

"What do you intend to do with your play, Bob?" asked Sam, interestedly.

"I intend to sell it to some manager, if I can."

"And if it makes a hit you expect to get famous?"

"I don't expect to get famous through that play. That is my first attempt—the opening wedge. If I can get it produced, and it attracts enough attention, it will get my name before the public. Then I'll write another play, and try to do much better. If that goes, too, I'll keep on writing, and maybe some day I'll write a play that will make me famous, see?"

"I see," replied Sam. "Look out there, Miss Hamilton, you've got a bite."

Stella pulled up her line and saw a fine fish dangling at the end of it.

As she started to pull the line in the fish managed to free its gills from the hook, fell back into the water and disappeared.

"Isn't that too provoking for anything?" she pouted.

"Better luck next time," laughed Bob, as he rebaited the hook.

"Oh, dear, I don't believe I'll catch another one," she said, doubtfully.

"Why not? There are lots of others in the creek."

"That fish may warn the others against my bait," she replied, demurely.

"That's right," nodded Sam, with a grin. "It happened to me once."

"Did it, really?" asked the girl. "Do tell me about it."

"I was fishing one day in another creek, and pulling 'em out as fast as I dropped the bait into the water. After I'd caught about twenty, one got away from me, just like yours did."

"Well," said Stella, with an interested look, "what then?"

"I didn't get another bite after that."

"You didn't?"

"No. The worst of it was I knew the fish were on to me."

"How did you?"

"The water was as clear as crystal, and before I lost that fish I could see them rush in a drove for the bait as soon as I cast it in. They had a regular scrap among themselves to see which one would get it."

"It must have been fun," said Stella.

"It was—for me. Well, when that fish got away from my hook and dropped back into the water all the fish gathered in a circle about him. In about a minute not a fish was in sight. He had warned them against the bait and they skipped out."

"That's a pretty good fish story, Sam," said Bob. "But I would advise you not to tell it too often."

At that moment Stella uttered a little scream of delight and pulled up her line with as fine a fish as before, which she succeeded in landing safely.

"There, I did catch another, after all," she said, in a tone of satisfaction.

"I'm afraid your yarn doesn't count for much, Sam," laughed Bob.

"Oh, I don't know. I guess the fish that escaped was too stupid to give the snap away," he said.

After catching a dozen fish the party returned to the house.

CHAPTER VI.

BOB STARTS FOR NEW YORK TO SEE ABOUT HIS PLAY.

After supper that evening Bob brought the manuscript of his play from his room and handed it to Mrs. Canfield.

"Thank you," she said, with a smile. "I will read it to-morrow morning."

She kept her word, and when she saw Bob after dinner next day she told him that his drama was very good, indeed, especially for a first attempt.

"Indeed," she said, "it was a surprise to me. I've seen many a play performed that was far worse, and the work, too, of an experienced writer. I can't understand how you, a country boy, could put your ideas together in such a practical way. Really, you have gone to work about it as if you were perfectly familiar with theatrical methods and the

theater itself. Where did you get your knowledge from?" Bob explained that he had got his information from Mr. Richmond.

"Ah, indeed? I know Mr. Richmond. He is a good actor. So he was boarding here last summer?"

"Yes, ma'am. I went around with him a good deal, and he seemed to take considerable interest in me, particularly after I told him I meant to write a play."

He told the actress how Mr. Richmond had drafted a Wild West drama for him as a guide, and chowed him how the play should be put together so that it would be adapted to presentation on the stage.

"I wrote the dialogue, and the complete drama is in my trunk. But, of course, I can't do anything with it, because the ideas and situations are not mine. In fact, Mr. Richmond said that the scheme was merely a rehash of a play that has been before the public. He laid it out for me in order to show me how a modern play is built."

"I see," said Mrs. Canfield. "You have evidently profited well by his instructions. Well, come up to my room and we'll go over your play, scene by scene, and I'll point out how, in my opinion, it can be improved."

Bob and the actress spent the afternoon together improving the drama, and he took it away with him to rewrite at his leisure such parts of it as required alteration and improvement.

During the month that followed, Bob submitted each act, as he finished it, to the inspection of the actress, and more alterations were made in the manuscript.

Finally the play received her complete approval, and then Bob rewrote it carefully from beginning to end, and sent it by express to a dramatic agent named Augustus Thacker, who had an office in Union Square, New York.

Mrs. Canfield knew Mr. Thacker, and she wrote a note requesting him to give the play his consideration and try to dispose of it to the author's advantage.

This note Bob inclosed in his own letter to the agent, and then he hopefully awaited Mr. Thacker's reply.

In about a week Bob received a letter bearing the imprint of "Augustus Thacker, Dramatic Agent, No. — Union Square, New York," and his heart gave a bound when he looked at it.

He hastily tore the envelope open and read the contents, which were brief.

Mr. Thacker acknowledged receipt of the melodrama, "The Red Light," and would give it his prompt attention.

If he found it available he would try to play it with some manager wanting a play constructed on the lines of Bob's drama.

He stated what his terms were for disposing of dramatic productions, and concluded by saying that Bob would hear from him in due course.

Bob showed the letter to Mrs. Canfield, and she told him that Mr. Thacker had said all that was necessary, and that he must wait until he heard from the agent.

It was about this time that Bob was summoned as a witness against the mail-bag robbers, and it took him away from home a couple of days.

When he got back he was just in time to bid Stella Hamilton and her mother good-by.

They were going to spend the month of August at the seashore.

"I suppose you'll go down to New York in the near future about your play," said the girl. "When you do you must call and see us. We shall be delighted to see you."

"I shall not fail to call on you if I go to New York," replied Bob. "Perhaps you wouldn't object to me writing to you occasionally in the meanwhile."

"I should be glad to have you do so," she replied. "You can address me at the Surf House, Long Branch, until the first week in September; after that a letter will reach me at my home, the address of which I have already given you."

Two weeks after the departure of the Hamiltons, Bob received the \$500 check from the Post-office Department, which he deposited for collection with the Paisley Bank.

That made him worth \$750, in his own right, and he began to feel quite independent.

About the middle of August Mrs. Canfield left Sunnyside Cottage to attend the rehearsals in New York for the new play in which she was engaged to appear during the coming season.

Bob was sorry she had to go, as he had found her very interesting and lively, and had made himself particularly attentive to her after Stella went away.

The other boarders did not attract him much, for they were of the usual order whose limit was generally two weeks.

and who tried to get more than a hundred cents' worth for every dollar they put up for board.

Mrs. Canfield left quite a pile of theatrical papers behind her, and Bob took the bunch to his own room to look them over.

One advertisement that attracted his attention read as follows:

PLAY FOR SALE.—A farce comedy. With 15,000 sheets of special paper. Short cast. Booked solid in best one-night stands. Will sacrifice for less than paper cost. Address, John Thomas, Box 162, Wichita, Kansas.

From his many conversations with Mr. Richmond and Mrs. Canfield, Bob was at no great loss to understand the professional language used in the advertisement.

He knew that "Special paper" meant printed showbills executed for that particular farce comedy, and that "booked solid in best one-night stands" meant that the manager of the show had all the time filled at good towns where the company was to play one night only.

"I wonder why John Thomas wants to sacrifice his play at less than the cost of the printing when he's got all his time filled?" Bob asked himself. "Maybe it's been a failure at the start, or his cash has given out. If I were in his place I'd try and get an 'angel,' as Mrs. Canfield calls the moneyed man who backs a show."

Bob waited patiently to hear from Mr. Augustus Thacker about his play, but the whole of September passed away without any word from him.

The agent had now had the drama in his possession eight weeks, and Bob thought it was about time something was doing, so he wrote the agent a polite letter of inquiry on the subject.

After waiting a week for a reply, and not getting one, Bob surprised his mother one morning by telling her that he was going to New York to look after the drama.

"Can't you do your business by mail?" she asked.

"I've been trying to, mother, but Mr. Thacker doesn't seem disposed to waste a postage stamp on me."

"Perhaps he hasn't done anything with it yet."

"That may be, but he ought to have the courtesy to say so. I was speaking to the postmaster about it yesterday, and he said that Mr. Thacker might do me out of the play if I didn't follow him up closely. He told me that a man connected with the profession once told him that some theatrical agents are not to be trusted any further than you can see them. Of course, that man, for some reason, may have a grouch against theatrical agents, but it is just as well to be on the safe side. I am sure my play is a good one, and I don't propose to lose it if I can help myself."

"When do you think of going, Bob?"

"To-morrow morning."

"I hope you will take good care of yourself. A big city like New York is full of dangers. People are continually being run down by automobiles, and street cars, and other vehicles. You must keep your eyes about you all the time." "You needn't worry about me, mother. I can take care of myself," replied Bob, confidently.

"You must call on the Hamiltons. They were very kind to invite you. I think Stella is a sweet girl."

"I think she is, too. I'll call on them, you may depend."

That afternoon he drew \$50 from the bank to pay his expenses, and when he got home he packed his suit-case with what he thought he would require for a short stay.

When he left for the station next morning to catch the 8:10 train, he told his mother that he would be back by Saturday, but circumstances ruled otherwise, and many Saturdays passed before he saw the farm again.

CHAPTER VII.

BOB VISITS AUGUST THACKER'S OFFICE.

Bob made his entree into New York via the Weehawken Ferry, which landed him at the foot of West Forty-second Street.

It was about half-past eleven, and he felt hungry, for he had eaten his breakfast at six o'clock.

He asked the ticket agent what car he should take to reach Union Square.

"Take a cross-town car to Broadway, and change for a

car going downtown. Tell the conductor to let you off at the Square."

Bob thanked him and got aboard a Forty-second Street car.

The conductor let him out at the corner of Broadway.

He asked a policeman to direct him to a nearby restaurant and was told there was one down the block.

He found it without any trouble and had a good dinner, after which he hailed a Broadway car and was carried down to Union Square.

He had the letter in his pocket with the agent's name and address, and he looked around for the number.

A policeman told him that it was on the east side of the Square, near Fourteenth Street, and he crossed over.

When he reached the building he saw a sign over two windows on the third floor, which read: "Augustus Thacker, Theatrical Agent."

He entered, walked up two flights of narrow stairs, and standing on the landing, looked for Mr. Thacker's office.

Ahead of him to the right were two doors with glass upper sections.

One bore Mr. Thacker's name and business, the other was marked simply "Private."

Bob pushed open the first door and entered the office.

He found himself in a fair-sized room furnished with half a dozen chairs, a desk, at which a small boy sat, a table on which were spread several dramatic and sporting papers, while the walls were well covered with pictures of theatrical celebrities, sandwiched in between theatrical lithographs and half-sheet hangers.

The boy, who was read-headed and pock-marked, looked up in a lazy way as Bob closed the door.

He made no effort to ascertain the visitor's business until Bob walked over to him to ascertain if Mr. Thacker was in.

"He's in, all right, but is engaged. Are you an actor?"

"No," replied Bob. "I'm an author."

The boy looked at him curiously and not without some interest.

"What do you write?" he asked.

"I've written a play which I sent to Mr. Thacker to sell for me."

The boy grinned.

"Are you from out of town?" he asked, noting the sun-burned look on Bob's face.

"Yes. I live near Paisley."

"Where is that?"

"Green County, New York."

The boy probably did not know there was such a county in the State.

However, he judged it was somewhere up-country.

He looked more critically at the caller to see if he could distinguish any hayseed about him, but Bob did not have a verdant look, so the lad concluded that Paisley must be some big town or small city.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Robert Rider."

"You ought to join a circus," said the youth, with a broad grin.

"Why?"

"Because you're a Rider. See the joke?" chuckled the office boy.

"Say are you often taken this way?" asked Bob, rather nettled at the boy's witticism.

"Taken what way?"

"Trying to be funny. What's your name?"

"Mike Feeney."

"What are you—the office boy?"

"I'm the whole thing when the boss is out."

"I should imagine you were. You don't seem to be very busy."

"Yes, I'm busy readin'."

"What do you do to earn your wages?"

"Warm this chair most of the time," grinned Feeney.

"When any of the profesh come in lookin' for an engagement I take their names to the boss, if he's in."

"Then take mine in."

"I will, when the tart manager that's chewing his ear comes out."

"Why do you call him a tart manager?"

"Oh, because he is. The woods are full of them. They make a great bluff about takin' a show out, and in about a week the people are countin' the ties on their way back to the Rialto."

This was information for Bob.

"Do you mean that the companies disband as soon as that?" he asked, in surprise.

"I should snicker. I've known them to come back after one night in Jersey, when they'd engaged people for a season of forty-eight weeks."

"How is that?"

"Search me. I guess the first night was a frost, and the manager didn't have the money to pay fares to the next stand."

"I thought a manager had to have a good wad to take out a properly equipped company, with scenery, effects, properties and other things?"

"That hamfatter inside hasn't any money, unless he's struck a new angel."

"You mean a backer?"

"Cert. What else? The last time he was out he had a wholesale butcher on the string. The man was a cinch. He was in here with Grimmer several times when the old duff was engagin' the people, and I sized him up. He would have been good for ten times, I'll bet, if Grimmer had nursed him properly; but the stiff pulled his leg so hard before the show got started that the leg gave way after Grimmer and his bunch of people got as far as Trenton. As biz. was rotten anyway, Grimmer came back in a hurry when the angel faded, and the actors had to tackle the freight after leavin' their trunks at the last hotel."

"That isn't the way Broughman does business, I understand."

"I should say not! Broughman is a real manager. Grimmer is a fake."

"I shouldn't think that Mr. Thacker would bother with him."

"Why not? Grimmer always engages his people here and to pony up commissions in advance. The boss has an 'N. T.' sign over his desk."

"N. T.?"

"No trust."

"Is that Mr. Grimmer who's inside now?"

"Yep."

"Do you suppose he'll be done soon?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

"What kind of angel he's got in tow."

"Is the angel in there, too?"

"Nope. He never brings him around if he can help it."

Bob glanced around upon the photographs tacked on the wall.

Among others he noticed the picture of Mrs. Canfield.

Written across the bottom of it in a female hand were the words: "Yours truly, Kittie Bertrand."

"That looks like Mrs. Canfield's picture," said Bob.

"That's her."

"What does 'Yours truly, Kittie Bertrand,' mean, then?"

"That's her usual signed communication."

"She's a good actress," said Bob.

"Yes. That's true."

"She was out with one of the Broughman companies last season, and is going out again this season."

"Who says she was out with Broughman?" asked Feeney, evidently startled.

"She told me herself."

"Oh, if she told you so I ain't got nothin' to say. Where did you meet her?"

"She boarded at our farm most of the summer."

"What, are you from a farm?" asked the boy, in surprise.

"I am."

"You don't look like a jay, except for the sunburn on your face. I thought you said you come from a town up-State?"

"I said I live near Paisley Village."

"So Miss Bertrand was boardin' at your farm. I knew she was somewhere up the country."

"She left about three weeks ago to begin rehearsing with Broughman."

"She told you that, eh?" chuckled the youth.

"Yes, she wouldn't she, if it's so?"

"That's right. What she says always goes with me."

"Is she gone out yet?"

"Nope. She was in here this mornin'."

"Then I guess I'll call and see her, if I can find out where she lives."

"I'll give you her address," and Feeney scribbled something on a piece of paper and handed it to Bob.

"It's: Mrs. Bertrand, No. -- West Thirty-ninth Street."

Just then the outer door opened and admitted a tall,

spare, seedy-looking, smoothly-shaven man, with long hair that fell over his frayed collar.

He sported a plug hat, and yellowish-tinged spats over his cracked patent leather shoes.

His shiny Prince Albert coat was tightly buttoned, and his right hand was thrust through it at the chest.

He strode toward the office boy with a tragic air.

"Gadzooks, Michael, 'tis a balmy day," he said in a deep-toned voice. "Is Thacker to be seen? Perchance he has secured something for me."

"Nothin' doin', Ranter," said Feeney, with a yawn.

"Wilt thou take my name inside, Michael?"

"The boss is busy and this gent comes next."

Mr. Ranter, who was an actor beyond any doubt, eyed Bob with some interest.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, extending his hand with a show of enthusiasm. "A brother professional, I perceive. I know thy face not, but I welcome thee just the same."

"Cut it out, Ranter," interposed Feeney. "He isn't an actor. He's an author."

"It is all the same. The immortal Shakespeare was both an author and an actor. Thy name, friend?"

"Robert Rider."

"And mine is McKean Ranter. You have heard of me, of course. I once supported Charlotte Cushman."

"And now you have a hard job to support yourself," chuckled the irrepressible Feeney.

"May I have a word with you, Rider? Come hither; this corner is suitable for confidential communications."

"Look out, Rider; he's goin' to touch you for a nickel," warned Feeney, who knew the actor's methods.

Mr. Ranter was in no way rebuffed by the office boy's exclamation.

He held on to Bob's arm, like a drowning man to a plank, and said, in a stage whisper:

"Prythee, hast thou got a stray quarter in thy jeans? I am in sore need of a square meal. I have tasted neither bite nor sup these twelve hours, and I fain would break my fast."

The actor certainly looked like an object of charity.

His eyes had a hollow and sunken look, his cheeks were sallow and caved in, and his hands trembled.

Bob felt sorry for him, and, fishing a twenty-five cent piece out of his pocket, handed it to the man who in his early days had supported Mrs. Cushman, according to his own statement.

The actor's fingers grasped the silver coin with a pitiful kind of avidity.

"I thank thee, friend," he said, huskily. "Some day when prosperity showers on me her refulgent beams once more, I will return this small contribution with interest. Till then, friend, I will say farewell. Perchance we shall meet again."

With these words, Mr. Ranter faded through the door as fast as his long legs could carry him, and he made a bee-line for a saloon in the neighborhood where they set out a big free lunch.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUPLICITY OF A THEATRICAL AGENT.

Hardly had the corridor door closed behind the actor when the door of the private room opened and Augustus Thacker appeared in the opening.

He cast a sharp glance at Bob and then addressed Feeney.

"Take this note up to the St. James Building, Mike," he said. "Want to see me?" he added, turning to Bob.

"Are you Mr. Thacker?"

"That's my name."

"Then I called to see you."

"Take a seat. I'll be at liberty in a few minutes."

He returned to his desk in the inner room as Feeney, after a friendly wink at Bob, left the office on his errand.

The boy amused himself for a few minutes looking at the photos on the walls and reading the bills, then he took a seat near the door of the private room.

It happened that Mr. Thacker had inadvertently left it ajar about an inch, and the conversation going on between the theatrical agent and his caller floated out quite plainly to Bob's ear.

"You say this young fellow you've got on a string has got plenty of coin and is stuck on backing a good show?" said the voice of Augustus Thacker.

"Yes. He's the easiest mark I've picked up yet. He told me that his grandmother left him \$20,000. His ambition is to become a manager, and I've promised to teach him the business," chuckled Martin Grimmer.

"I envy your luck," replied the agent. "Why didn't you bring him along and let me have a peep at him?"

"I don't care about exhibiting him around among the fraternity," answered Grimmer, dryly. "Something might happen to him. I consider it my duty to protect him since I have won his confidence."

"You mean you are afraid somebody else might get him away from you," laughed Thacker.

"Such things have happened," admitted Grimmer; "and my experience warns me not to put temptation in other people's way."

"You say you are looking for a strong play—one with plenty of good situations in it and broad comedy. Something, in fact, that will take in the provinces. Well, I guess I've got the very thing you want."

"Have you? What is it?"

"It's a melodrama in four acts."

"What's the title?"

"The Red Light."

Bob's heart gave a great bound.

Thacker was evidently trying to place his play, and he felt grateful to him for his efforts in that direction.

"The name isn't so bad. It'll take special scenery, I s'pose?"

"Yes. There's a lighthouse scene in the third act, interior view, which sinks so as to show the heroine mounting the circular stairs to the lantern."

"Something after the castle scene in 'Arrah-na-Pogue,' eh?"

"On that plan. The girl stops the machinery which revolves the red and white lights in the lantern in order to throw the red light shoreward, which is a signal for help. The villain follows her up to thwart her, but she breaks the connections so he can't undo her work. Then he chases her out of the gallery. She tries to escape from him by sliding down the rope of the fog-bell. As the villain is about to cut the rope—"

"The hero appears and rescues her, I s'pose?"

"Exactly. It's a corking good climax, and the principal one of the play."

"I'll admit that it isn't half bad. What other striking situations are there?"

"A murder in the first act, followed by the arrest of the hero, who is wrongfully accused of the crime."

"Of course," chuckled Grimmer. "The hero always is. What kind of a villain? A swell rascal, who wants to wed the heroine 'cause he's discovered she's heiress to a big property? Wears a high dicer, and smokes cigarettes in a debonair fashion?"

"Nothing of the sort. That's done to death in all the cheap melodramas that are floating about the country. The villain is a hardened, middle-aged skipper of a fishing schooner. He's stuck on the girl, whom he's known ever since she was knee-high to a marlin-snipe. The hero is a college graduate who's got into a scrape, nothing that reflects on his manly qualities, but his wealthy father gets a mistaken idea of it and bounces his son out of the house in a fit of passion. The young fellow applies for and secures, through a pull, of course, the position of keeper of the lighthouse off the village where the girl lives. He gets acquainted with her, they fall in love, and that furnishes the ground work for the trouble that follows."

"What's the climax of the second act?"

"A thrilling escape from the lock-up by the hero."

"How about the comedy? I hope there's plenty of horse-play, for that's what the out-of-town people want."

"There's two good comedy parts—a young fisherman and a traveling fakir—both in love with the soubrette, who's a giddy thing that doesn't know her own mind. The scenes between them are very funny. A corking good soubrette would be able to put plenty of snap and ginger into the play."

"That's what I want. The play rather strikes me. Who's the author?"

"He's an unknown quantity. New at the business, but got the stuff in him that'll find its level one of these days. You can gamble on it he's a corker."

"How did you get hold of him?"

"I haven't met him yet. He lives on a farm somewhere up-State. He sent the manuscript to me by post, with a recommendation from Kittie Bertrand, who boarded this summer at his mother's place. She helped fix up the raw

parts, but that was all. By the way, I may as well say right here if you take the play you'll have to take Kittie with it. She's dead set on playing the heroine, and I've promised to consider her wishes in placing it. But you won't lose anything by engaging her, as she's a good one."

"What does she want?"

"Fifty bones and expenses."

"Say, do you take me for a National Bank? I'll give her twenty, money sure, and she to pay her own."

"Oh, if you're going to work the hamfat business we won't say anything more about the play. I thought you had an angel with plenty of the stuff—\$20,000 and all that? Do you want to scoop the money without giving the boy a run for it?"

"No. I expect to put out a good show this time, but I'm not going to pay fancy salaries."

"You can't get a good leading woman under fifty to seventy-five plunks."

"Oh, the woods are full of talent. An advertisement would bring out a bunch."

"Well, you're the doctor; but you want to understand that you can't get the play without Miss Bertrand."

A brief silence ensued.

"What royalty does the author want for this play?"

"Don't worry about that, Grimmer. Miss Bertrand's has a pull with him."

"Well, now you're talking. She has a private arrangement with the author, I s'pose?"

"I can't say that she has," replied Thacker.

"Well, where does he come in?"

"He doesn't come in at all," laughed the agent.

"Then you and Miss Bertrand are going to do him out of it, eh?"

Bob held his breath at this revelation.

"It's his first effort, and he doesn't know its value. I'll write him and tell him that he can't expect to get more out of it than his name on the bills. That ought to be compensation enough. It will get his name before the public and help him to sell his next piece. In fact, he's lucky to get it produced on any old terms. Some agents in my place would try to pull his leg in addition."

"That's right," chuckled Grimmer. "The trouble with you, Thacker, you're too honest. You wouldn't steal a dollar more than you could get your fingers on."

"It's going to cost me something anyway. I sent the play out to be typewritten by a competent person in the St. James Building, together with the parts. Feeney has gone after it."

"How much will it cost you?"

"Twenty dollars."

"Going to charge that against the author, aren't you?"

"Oh, I'll charge him a hundred. He won't know the difference. He's more or less a jay."

"He's bright enough as a writer, but the smarter the writer the poorer the business man. I look upon him as easy game. At any rate, you needn't worry about him. You'll do all your business with me. He doesn't cut any ice whatever."

"If your boy brings the play back you'll let me have it to run over, of course?"

"Certainly. You can read it right here in the office while I'm out at lunch."

"What's the matter with me taking it away? I can't judge of the thing on the jump."

"You can form an opinion of its merits by looking it over. You don't need to read it carefully. I'll guarantee it's a winner. If you like it, as I'll bet you will, just pull your angel's leg for \$250, and bring it to me as a guarantee of good faith, and I'll let you have the play and the typewritten parts."

Mr. Grimmer didn't like the idea of putting up so much money, and said so, so, after some argument, Thacker reduced his price to \$150, to which the manager agreed.

By that time Bob was worked up to a pitch of considerable indignation over what he considered the duplicity of Augustus Thacker.

He determined then and there to recover his play, and take it to an honest agent, if he could find one.

While he was revolving his plan in his mind the outer door opened and Feeney entered with a bundle under his arm.

Bob jumped to his feet and intercepted him.

"Is that the play of 'The Red Light' you've there?" he asked, eagerly.

"Sure. How did you know?"

"It's my play. Let me look at it."

"Can't do it. If it's your play you'll have to see the boss."

"You paid \$20 for having it typewritten, didn't you?"

"That's right."

"Well, here's the money. Leave the bundle with me and take the money in to Mr. Thacker."

"Oh, I can't do that. If you're going to pay the bill turn it over to the boss. If you want to look your play over Thacker will let you do it, I reckon."

"I've got no use for Thacker any more. I want my play, and I'm going to have it. That's all there is to it," said Bob, resolutely.

He swooped down on Feeney and grabbed the bundle, at the same time forcing the \$20 bill into his hand.

A struggle ensued for the possession of the play, during which the table was overturned with a crash, and the office boy went down with it.

This brought both Thacker and Grimmer to the door of the private room just as Bob snatched the bundle from Feeney's grasp.

"What does this mean?" demanded the theatrical agent, angrily.

"He swiped the play from me!" cried Feeney, trying to extricate himself from the table and debris.

"Who are you, young man, and what do you mean by such conduct in my office?"

"I am Robert Rider, the author of this play, and I've decided to withdraw it from your hands and take it elsewhere."

If a bomb had exploded in the place it couldn't have caused Augustus Thacker greater consternation.

CHAPTER IX.

BOB MAKES A PLUCKY RESCUE, AND VISITS MRS. CANFIELD AT HER FLAT.

"You are Robert Rider?" he gasped. Why, you're only a boy."

"What of it?"

"You don't expect me to believe that you're the author of 'The Red Light'?"

"I don't care whether you believe it or not. Mrs. Canfield recommended you to me as a proper person to send my play to, and I took her word for it. But I've changed my mind since. I'm going to see another agent."

"Well, if you are Robert Rider, the author of the play, you can't take it away with you."

"Why not?" replied Bob, defiantly.

"Because I've got a bill of charges against it, and shall retain the manuscript until it is liquidated."

"If you mean the \$20 you paid for having the manuscript and parts typewritten, your boy has the money in his hand."

"Twenty dollars!" cried Mr. Thacker. "How did you know it cost \$20?"

"I heard you say so to that gentleman."

The theatrical agent looked astonished and disturbed.

Then the truth occurred to his mind.

"Oh, I see," he sneered; "you are a Paul Pry. You were listening at the door to our private conversation."

"I couldn't help hearing it when you left the door ajar yourself. You knew I was out here, for you told me to take a seat and wait."

"I didn't know you were the author of 'The Red Light,' if I had I should have invited you inside, as I was arranging with Manager Grimmer to take out your play."

"If Manager Grimmer wants to take my play out he'll have to make his arrangements with me. I want something more tangible than my name on the bills. I may be an easy mark in your estimation, but I know my rights and intend to protect them."

"Are you insinuating that I was not treating you fairly?" demanded the agent.

"No, I'm not insinuating anything. I'm telling you straight from the shoulder that you were trying to do me," replied Bob, angrily.

"That's plain language, young man, and you've got to retract it."

"I'll retract nothing. I heard all you said to that man about me and my play. He's a witness against you."

"Excuse me, young fellow, you can't drag me into this thing. I know Mr. Thacker to be a gentleman, and you are mistaken in what you overheard," said Mr. Grimmer.

"Well, I'm not going to argue the matter any more. I will take my leave."

"Hold on. Not so fast, if you please. You have only a partial claim on your play."

"Partial claim! What do you mean by that?"

"Miss Bertrand can claim equal rights of authorship in that production. She assisted you largely in its construction. In fact, she practically licked your play into shape. As I represent Miss Bertrand, I shall consider it my duty to look after her interests."

"I am willing to acknowledge my obligation to Mrs. Canfield, whom you refer to as Miss Bertrand, but whatever she did was purely voluntary on her part, and she did not hint at any compensation. However I have no objection to paying her out of whatever profits come to me when the drama is produced."

"Talk is cheap, young man. I shall insist on you leaving that bundle with me. Your rights will be looked after, don't you fear."

"I prefer to look after my own rights, so I mean to take this play with me."

"Not with my permission."

"I am not asking for your permission."

"You'll either leave the play, or the room, in charge of a policeman," said the agent, menacingly, thinking to intimidate his country visitor.

"Call your officer. The play will go with me just the same, and I'll put it up to the magistrate to pass upon my rights."

His prompt reply rather discomfited Mr. Thacker.

At that moment Mike Feeney, who had edged around behind Bob, made sundry signs to his boss, what that individual understood.

He nodded, and then made a sudden grab at the visitor's arm.

As Bob drew back, Feeney snatched the bundle from his hand and dashed out at the door.

Mr. Thacker seized Bob to prevent him from following.

As the young author's monkey was up, and he had muscles of steel, the theatrical agent found himself stripped up on the floor before he knew what was going to happen.

Bob then flew after the red-headed Feeney, who had got a flight of stairs the start of him.

When Bob reached the street door Feeney was just disappearing around the corner of Fourteenth Street.

Bob was after him like a shot, and he could run some.

The sidewalk, however, was crowded at that hour, and both pursued and pursuer were at a disadvantage.

Feeney's complete familiarity with the neighborhood, and his ability to dodge the pedestrians better than Bob, enabled him to increase his distance in spite of all obstacles, and presently he kited around the corner of Irving Place and dashed toward Fifteenth Street.

As Bob followed him, a third of a short block behind, a well-dressed young man stepped off the walk to cross over to the entrance to the Academy of Music.

A swiftly-driven cab came down the street at the moment which the young man did not observe.

Bob, in spite of the fact that his thoughts and eyes were on Feeney, saw the young man's peril, and, casting all personal considerations to the wind, he sprang forward into the street, grabbed the young fellow around the wrist and swung him around out of danger.

It was touch and go with them both, for the wheels of the cab brushed against their sides.

The young man looked bewildered, and then he seemed to realize the situation.

"You saved my life," he said, gratefully, grasping Bob by the hand.

"All right," replied Rider. "You're welcome," then he broke away and resumed his pursuit of Feeney, who by this time had vanished around the corner of Fifteenth Street, in the direction of Union Square.

When he reached the corner the red-headed boy was not in sight.

"He's got back to his office by this time, and Mr. Thacker has my play back in his hands. All I can do now is to see a lawyer about the matter."

The conversation he had overheard between Thacker and Manager Grimmer had given him a slight suspicion that Mrs. Canfield was in the scheme to rob him of his play, but he hated to believe that she was, since they had been so chummy at the farm.

He pulled the paper containing her address, given him

by Feeney, from his pocket, and studied it for a moment or two.

"I guess I'll go up and call on her," he mused, "and tell her about my experience with Mr. Thacker. She seems to be on very friendly terms with the agent. Maybe she will be able to help me out; if she can't, I'll see a lawyer to-morrow."

Bob crossed the Square to Broadway, and then walked up the Great White Way to West Thirty-ninth Street, on the corner of which stood the Casino.

Then he walked down to the number given him by Feeney.

He found it was a cheap-looking apartment house called the Esmeralda, whose highly-ornamented vestibule brought into strong relief its general tone of shabbiness and decay.

Bob examined the names over the letter-boxes until his eye rested on the following:

"Canfield—Bertrand—Nadine—St. Clair," one under the other and pasted against the glass of one box.

Bob pressed the electric button, and presently he heard a clicking sound at the door-knob.

Entering, he walked through the dimly-lit, musty-smelling hall, and up several flights of stairs, until he came to a landing where a young lady with a washed-out countenance, dressed in a soiled wrapper, stood waiting.

"Whom did you wish to see?" she asked, abruptly.

"Mrs. Canfield."

"You mean Kittie Bertrand, I suppose. Walk inside."

Bob accompanied her to a sitting-room in which, upon a lounge, sat Mrs. Canfield and another young lady, also attired in wrappers, while a pair of chairs were occupied by two smoothly-shaven young men in their shirt-sleeves, all chatting and laughing in a free-and-easy way.

The room, whose furnishings did not convey any striking evidence of superfluous wealth, was decorated for the most part with theatrical lithographs and photographs, the latter being nearly all autographed "Yours affectionately."

"Why, Bob Rider!" exclaimed Mrs. Canfield, springing to her feet with the utmost astonishment. "Is it possible it is really you?"

"Yes, ma'am; it's me, all right," replied Bob, rather embarrassed by the presence of the company, who regarded his presence with some interest, but no surprise.

"Well, I'm awfully glad to see you," she said, grasping his hand with considerable enthusiasm. "When did you come to town?"

"This morning, about eleven."

"This is a surprise to see you. Allow me to introduce you to my dear friends, Gladys Nadine and Maude St. Clair. They rent this flat with me. Girls, this is Bob Rider, of Sunnyside Cottage, Greene County, up-State, a rising young dramatic author. Gladys is with the 'Wizard of Oz' at the Academy, and Maude is with the 'Giddy Whirl' at the Casino. Mr. Montegu Raleigh. Bob Rider. Mr. Raleigh is in vaudeville. He's at the Victoria this week. Mr. Jack Deforest, Bob Rider. Mr. Deforest was with the 'King of the Peacocks' last season. At present he is resting. And now that you all know each other, make yourself as comfortable as possible. If you feel warm, Bob, take off your jacket. We don't stand on ceremony here."

Thus speaking, Mrs. Canfield made room for Bob on the lounge between herself and Gladys Nadine.

CHAPTER X.

BOB COMES TO AN AGREEMENT WITH THACKER AND GRIMMER.

"Have a glass of wine, Mr. Rider?" asked Jack Deforest, hospitably.

"No, thanks. I don't drink," replied Bob.

The two professional gentlemen looked at the boy as if he were kind of a freak.

"You'll have a cigarette, then," said Deforest, offering a package.

"I don't smoke, either," answered Bob, feeling as if he was out of water in that gathering.

"Re-al-ly!" drawled the performer. "You are quite a teetotaler."

"How did you find me out, Bob?" asked the actress.

"I called at Mr. Augustus Thacker's office and his office boy gave me the address."

"What did Mr. Thacker have to say about the prospects of putting your melodrama on?"

"He was trying to make a deal with a manager named Grimmer, who has an angel in tow, to take it on the road."

"That so?" replied the lady, with a look of interest.

"Yes. The arrangement was that you were to be engaged to play the heroine. I thought you were rehearsing with one of Broughman's companies."

All present turned and looked at Mrs. Canfield in some surprise, and that lady blushed a bit.

"You must have misunderstood me, Bob," she said.

Bob knew that he had not misunderstood her, for if she had spoken about Broughman once she had a dozen or more times at the farm.

However, he was too much of a gentleman to contradict a lady, so he let it go at that.

"By the way," he continued, "I had some trouble with Mr. Thacker about my play."

"What was the trouble?"

"To tell you the truth, I don't like his methods," replied the young dramatist, bluntly. "He told Mr. Grimmer, the manager, in my hearing, that I wasn't to be considered in the matter at all. He said that the \$50 to be paid you per week would cover the royalty as well as your services. Mr. Grimmer was also to pay your expenses."

"Fifty per and ex. ought to put you on Easy Street, Miss Bertrand," said Montegu Raleigh; "that is, if the ghost walks regularly."

"Sounds almost too good to be true," chirped Gladys Nadine. "If you get all that, dear, you'll be cutting it too fat for Maude and me."

"I should say so," chirped in Miss St. Clair; "why, you you and me consider ourselves lucky to draw fifteen per, which, I'm thankful to say, we get without any string to it."

"There must be some mistake about me drawing your royalty, Bob," said Mrs. Canfield. "Why, that sounds too absurd for anything, doesn't it, Mr. Deforest?"

"I should smile," replied the unemployed performer. "The profession is not usually so fortunate. What is the name of your play, Mr. Rider?"

"The Red Light."

"Is it a lurid melodrama?"

"It's a melodrama in four acts."

"If s'pose there is a lot of Stand-aside-villain-and-let-me-pass in it to catch the sympathies of the working people," grinned Mr. Raleigh.

"And the heroine is strongly emotional, of course," added Mr. Deforest.

"And is persecuted from the rise of the curtain till the villain gets it where the chicken got the axe," giggled Gladys.

"And the hero is a manly, self-sacrificing fellow who wears his heart on his sleeve, like all heroes do," warbled Miss St. Clair, sweetly.

Bob looked at the four professionals suspiciously, wondering whether they were guying his play.

Mrs. Canfield came to his aid by assuring the company that "The Red Light" was a play above the average, and would not disgrace a Broadway playhouse.

At that point the electric bell in the kitchen sounded, betokening more visitors, and Miss St. Clair left the room to push the button.

In a few minutes she returned with two callers, who proved to be Augustus Thacker and Manager Grimmer.

Both were taken aback to find Bob Rider on the scene, and the theatrical agent hastily called Mrs. Canfield aside to ask how the boy came to be there.

Whatever passed between them caused Mr. Thacker to make a change of front.

"I want to apologize for what happened at my office to-day, Mr. Rider. I hope you'll let by-gones be by-gones. I am prepared to make satisfactory terms with you in regard to your play. Miss Bertrand has made your cause her own, and consequently you're bound to get a square deal."

"Yes, Bob," put in the actress. "I have insisted that you shall be treated right or Mr. Thacker will have to step down and out in the matter. It has been agreed to appoint you the treasurer of the Red Light Co., if you will accept the position, and you will be asked to assist in conducting the rehearsals. That will be satisfactory to you, Bob?" she asked, in the old fascinating way that had caught his fancy on the farm.

Bob concluded that he would take a chance on it, and told her so.

She advised him to accept the position of treasurer, and go out with the company.

"You will gain a knowledge of life that will be valuable to you hereafter, Bob," she said. "Besides, you will handle the money and be able to pay yourself."

Bob agreed that there was something in what she said,

so he shook hands with Mr. Thacker, who told him that, as it was customary for dramatists to pay for the type-writing of their manuscripts and the actors' parts, he would keep the \$20 and give him a receipt for it, and not ring in any fictitious charges hereafter.

Bob was then formally presented to Manager Grimmer, who confirmed the offer of the treasurership, and hoped they would be good friends.

Manager Grimmer, who had glanced through Bob's play, and expected to get possession of it when he had pulled his angel's leg to the tune of \$150, was very enthusiastic about the possibilities of the piece.

"The play is going to be a knock-out," he said. "That lighthouse scene will catch the audience every time. I'll wager my reputation as a manager that we'll play to the capacity of the houses along our route."

"You're going to get thirty-five per, Kittie," said Augustus Thacker, "and expenses."

"I thought it was fifty," remarked Bob.

"That was your mistake in lumping your money with hers. You are to get a certainty of \$15 and a percentage of the net receipts over an agreed figure. If Mr. Grimmer does the business he's looking for you ought to accumulate a bank account."

Manager Grimmer nodded and said that genius always got its reward.

As it was close to five now, Bob said he'd have to be going, since he had to look up a place to stop at.

"Come down to the Trafalgar, where I put up. It's a professional house. You can get a room for from three per up, and board yourself outside," said Deforest.

He obligingly offered to guide Bob to the establishment, and the boy accepted his generous offer.

"Don't fail to call at my office about noon to-morrow," said Mr. Thacker, genially.

"Are you people going near the paper office?" asked Manager Grimmer, following Bob and Deforest into the next room, where the latter's hat and coat were.

"Within a block," replied the actor.

"Here's \$2, Rider. Have 'em insert this advertisement in next Tuesday's issue," handing Bob the bill and a slip of paper.

"All right. I'll see that the paper gets it," replied Bob.

"Let's see what the gazabo is advertising for," said Deforest, when they got down to the street door.

Bob opened the note and read as follows:

WANTED—Leading man. Good dresser on and off. No fancy salary, but money sure. Also, a man for heavy lead, and a character man to manage stage. Pay own. No fares unless I know you. Address Martin Grimmer, Mgr. Red Light Co., care Thacker, No — Union Square, E.

"Looks as if he was after cheap people," said Deforest. "If I were you, Rider, I'd insist on good performers. A cheap bunch will only kill your play. What sort of an angel has Grimmer in tow?"

"A young man worth \$20,000."

The actor whistled.

"Grimmer will bleach him. Lor', how lucky some people are!"

"Will you take supper with me, Mr. Deforest?" said Bob, as they came to a restaurant.

"Will I? I wouldn't insult you by refusing. It will give me great pleasure to be your guest."

Whereupon they entered the eating-house and took their places at one of the tables.

CHAPTER XI.

BOB BEGINS WORK FOR MANAGER GRIMMER.

Martin Grimmer, who was about to direct the destinies of Bob Rider's four-act melodrama, "The Red Light," was, as Michael Feeney had remarked, a tart manager.

He clung to the fringe of theatricals, eking out a living that was sometimes luxurious, after a fashion, but most often precarious, the means for which were provided by people of an extremely compelling nature, who had an ardent desire to shine in the dramatic profession—either as embryo managers, or with the view of startling the world with their histrionic genius.

The bait that he usually employed was a three-line advertisement, which ran something after this fashion:

WANTED—PARTNER who will invest \$200 in repertoire and act as business manager and treasurer. Experience not necessary. A sure proposition. Address, Martin Grimmer, Trafalgar Hotel, New York.

All of Mr. Grimmer's undertakings, ostensibly in the interest of his dupes, but actually in his own, were rank failures.

His chief object was not so much the putting the company on the road as to separate the \$200 or more from his gullible partner.

When he had extracted the very last penny, the partnership was dissolved, owing to circumstances over which Mr. Grimmer asserted he had no control.

A few days before Bob Rider's visit to New York he had made the greatest catch in his checkered career.

George Sutton, a young college graduate, who had visions of becoming a successful theatrical manager, answered his advertisement for a partner.

He had just received a legacy of \$20,000 and was anxious to learn the ropes.

He called on Mr. Grimmer and had a talk with that foxy gentleman.

When, in a burst of confidence, he informed the manager of the extent of his pile, Mr. Grimmer nearly fell off his chair, but managed to control himself.

He assured Sutton that he was the very person the young man needed to put him on a level with the best-known managers of the day.

It would take a little money, of course, something more than \$200, to work things properly.

Sutton replied that he was willing to spend all the money necessary to accomplish his ambitious dreams.

Manager Grimmer then proceeded to lay out a scheme for his own enrichment.

He told Sutton that he would make it his business to secure a first-class play and a suitable company to put the same on the road.

He drew up a liberal estimate of the cost of the paper required to advertise the show, and quoted all the other expenses connected with the enterprise.

Sutton took his word for it all, and finally, as an evidence of good faith, advanced Mr. Grimmer \$250 for the purpose of starting the ball rolling.

With such a gullible and moneyed angel in tow, Mr. Grimmer decided that this time he would put out a show in earnest, and if it panned out he would take care to secure the lion's share of the profits.

On the day following Bob's visit to Mrs. Canfield's flat he appeared at Augustus Thacker's office according to arrangement with that gentleman.

Michael Feeney was in his chair, and he cast a doubtful glance at Bob, as the young dramatist entered the room.

He knew that his boss and the country boy had patched up their differences, but he wasn't certain how Bob regarded his conduct in depriving him of his play.

Bob soon showed that he entertained no hard feelings on the subject.

As far as he was concerned the incident was closed.

"Want to see the boss?" volunteered Feeney, with unusual readiness.

"You can let him know I'm here," replied Bob.

Feeney accordingly went into the private room and announced Bob's presence in the outer office.

The author of "The Red Light" was invited to walk inside.

He found Thacker and Grimmer together.

"I suppose you don't mind making yourself generally useful till the company gets out?" said Manager Grimmer to Bob.

"Certainly not, provided I'm not expected to live on air," answered the lad.

Thacker grinned and was satisfied there was nothing slow about the young author.

"Oh, I'll pay your expenses and a little over," replied Grimmer. "I've rented an office on Broadway, and I want somebody I can trust to represent me when I'm out, as well as to do my errands. As you are to be connected with the business end of the show, why, you might as well get into harness at once."

"I'm ready to do whatever you want, Mr. Grimmer."

"All right. That's settled, then. The office is Room 23, No. — Broadway. It isn't fitted up yet, as I only hired it this morning, but the furniture and other fixings will be

there about two o'clock, also the sign painter to decorate the glass panel of the outer door. Here is the key. I want you to be there when the stuff shows up. Feeney will give you some lithographs and photos to tack on the walls. Everything is paid for except the sign work. I don't know how much that will cost, but here is a \$2 bill to pay the man. Get him to make out a bill as a voucher, as my backer will require an accounting of all money expended," and he winked expressively at Mr. Thacker.

Bob was told that he would be expected to be on hand daily between ten and three or four, then he was dismissed.

"I see Grimmer is goin' to take a regular show out this time," said Feeney, when Bob returned to the outer office. "He must have struck a gold mine."

"I guess he's got a good backer, for it will take money to produce my melodrama in proper shape."

"You're goin' with the company, too, as treasurer."

"That's right," nodded Bob.

"The treasurer of a show usually handles the money taken in," grinned Feeney.

"I should suppose that was his business."

As it was now half-past twelve, Bob said he was going to lunch, after which he was going up to Mr. Grimmer's office.

CHAPTER XII.

BOB CALLS ON STELLA HAMILTON.

Soon after Bob let himself into the bar room hired by Manager Grimmer for a temporary office, the sign painter appeared.

Bob handed him the copy he was to transfer in black letters to the glass.

When the painter had finished his job the door bore the following legend:

SUTTON & GRIMMER.

"The Red Light," and other attractions.

Bob wondered what the other attractions were.

In due time a cheap roll-top desk, a table and four chairs arrived and were placed in suitable positions.

Then Bob opened the bundle he had brought from Thacker's office, containing half a dozen lithos, some old playbills, a dozen photos, some ancient dramatic publications, and a tack-hammer and tacks.

He placed the publications on the table, and decorated the walls with the rest of the stuff.

About this time Mr. Grimmer arrived, with a bottle of ink, pens and pen-holders, a blank pad, and a couple of account books.

He sat down at the desk and made out some copy for letterheads, envelopes and contracts.

"You're not very well acquainted with the city, are you, Rider?" he asked Bob.

"No, sir; but I guess I can find my way about."

"The next corner is Thirty-eighth Street."

"I know that."

"Well, I want you to take this copy to a printer on Forty-second Street, near Sixth Avenue. He does theatrical work of this kind. It's on the north side of the street. Sixth Avenue is the next street east of Broadway up here. It's west of Broadway below Thirty-second Street. They cross at Herald Square. You can't mistake Sixth Avenue, because the elevated structure is on it. Well, give the printer, there's his name, this copy and that deposit, and tell him I must positively have the stuff to-morrow afternoon. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Get up there as soon as you can. Lock the door, for I'm going away, and you needn't return till the morning, for there's nothing for you to do."

Bob performed his errand all right, and then spent the rest of the afternoon in Central Park.

After supper that evening he called on the Hamiltons, who lived in a select apartment house on West Forty-fourth Street.

He was cordially received, both by Stella and her mother.

"I'm awfully glad to see you, Bob," said the girl, who was dressed in a handsome house-gown, and looked particularly sweet.

"Thanks. Same here."

"Did you come to town about your play?"

"I did. It's going on the road in about three weeks."

"Is it possible!" she cried, in surprise. "You are fortunate to have placed it so soon."

"I suppose so; but I came mighty near being done out of it, just the same."

"Indeed? How is that?"

Bob told her about his first experience with Mr. Thacker, and then all that had happened since.

"My, but you're a plucky boy!" exclaimed Stella, admiringly.

"I wasn't going to be swindled out of my drama. If Mr. Thacker hadn't come to time I should have employed a lawyer to-day."

"So Mrs. Canfield is going to play the leading part. Why, I thought she was engaged with Mr. Broughman."

"I thought so, too, but we misunderstood her," said Bob, feeling that he ought to stand by his leading lady.

"I dare say you are very fortunate in securing her for your play."

"I judge so. Mr. Grimmer expects 'The Red Light' to make a hit. He's going to produce it regardless of cost. He's got a money backer, worth \$20,000. When we play in New York I shall see that you and your mother get a box."

"Thank you, Bob. We couldn't think of missing a play written by you. We both feel that you are uncommonly smart. One of these days, I am sure, your plays will be in great demand, and you will become famous as a playwright."

"I expect to," answered Bob, confidently. "You remember the day I saved you from the bull?"

"Shall I ever forget it?" she asked, with a little shudder.

"Well, I told Sam Sumner while we were fishing that I meant to be famous, and I intend to make good. I hope you will always take a personal interest in my success."

"Of course I will," she replied, in a tone that showed she meant it.

Bob spent a very pleasant evening with Stella and her mother, and left at ten o'clock, after promising to call soon again.

About eleven o'clock next morning, while Bob was reading an old copy of the paper, and waiting for Mr. Grimmer to appear, the door opened and a handsomely-dressed young man of perhaps twenty-two walked in.

As Bob's eyes rested on him he gave a slight start of surprise, for the visitor proved to be the young man he had rescued from a serious, if not fatal, accident the previous afternoon on Irving Place, when he was chasing Feeney to recover the manuscript of his play.

The recognition was mutual.

"Why, if my eyes do not deceive me, you are the boy who saved my life yesterday," said the caller, advancing with outstretched hand.

"That's right," admitted Bob.

"Why the dickens did you run off so quickly? You didn't give me the chance to thank you."

"I was in a great hurry at the time."

"Well, I'm awful glad to meet you again. What's your name? Are you working for Mr. Grimmer?"

"Yes, I'm working for Sutton & Grimmer, and my name is Bob Rider."

"Let me introduce myself as George Sutton, Mr. Grimmer's partner."

"Are you really Mr. Sutton?" ejaculated Bob, in surprise.

"I am. And I'll see that you're well taken care of, Bob."

"Thank you, Mr. Sutton. I suppose you don't know that I'm the author of 'The Red Light,' the melodrama you and Mr. Grimmer are about to put on the road?"

"You don't mean that, do you?" cried Sutton, incredulously.

"I certainly do. Mr. Grimmer will be here shortly and he will back me up."

"Well, well, I am astonished. I took you for the office boy," he said, laughingly. "You look very young for a professional dramatist, and especially the author of a play that Mr. Grimmer assures me is a winner."

"I'm growing older every day, Mr. Sutton, and will have a mustache by and by."

At that moment Mr. Grimmer walked in and greeted Sutton effusively.

He was about to introduce Bob, when the angel said:

"Oh, we already know each other."

Then he explained to the manager how Bob had saved him from a serious injury.

"I suppose you'll introduce that scene into one of your future plays," said Mr. Grimmer to Bob.

Sutton and the young dramatist laughed, and then Grimmer proceeded to tap his angel for the \$150 to get possession of the play from Mr. Thacker.

The young man wrote a check for the amount, payable to Martin Grimmer.

The manager endorsed it and handed it to Bob.

"Take that down to Thacker and bring back your play and the acting parts."

Bob jumped on a car and got off at Union Square.

On entering Thacker's office he found it well filled with professional-looking people, all of whom were talking shop.

None of them looked over-prosperous, while several were decidedly shabby.

Bob noticed that McKean ranter occupied the center of the stage, so to speak.

"Gadzooks! I'm glad to see thee again, friend," cried Ranter, intercepting the boy. "Allow me to make you acquainted with Walker Trelawney. He has just returned from the provinces after a successful season of two weeks."

Bob acknowledged the introduction and then said he was in a hurry.

He rushed over to Feeney.

"Mr. Thacker is engaged, I suppose?" he said.

"I should smile," grinned the office boy. "Anything important?"

"I have come down for the manuscript of my play. Here is Mr. Sutton's check to cover Mr. Thacker's fee for placing it. Will you take it in to him?"

"Sure, I will," and he did so.

He came out presently and said the boss wanted to see him.

Bob entered the room and found the agent engaged with a dashing chorus lady.

"This check, Rider, is my perquisite for placing your play, understand. I shall expect you to remit a similar amount, in any way that's most convenient to you, after you get on the road. Just sign that little document, which is simply an evidence of your indebtedness to me in the matter."

He handed Bob his pen and pushed the paper toward him.

Bob read it over carefully, to see that there were no traps in it, and then put his autograph to it.

"That completes our business relations, I believe," said the young dramatist.

"Yes, unless you happen to default in your payments; but as your play strikes me as a winner, I think we shall have no trouble on that score."

"Not if I get a square deal from the management, and I am sure I can depend on Mr. Sutton, at any rate."

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB REHEARSES HIS MELODRAMA.

Having got possession of Bob's melodrama, Mr. Grimmer proceeded to engage people for the various parts as cheaply as he could, using as an inducement "a long season and money sure."

Mr. Grimmer had engaged a hall on Sixth Avenue for the company to rehearse in, and as soon as the manager had made up the cast the professionals were directed to report there on a certain morning at ten o'clock to hear the author read his play and receive their parts.

At a few minutes before ten Bob locked up the office, and, accompanied by George Sutton, with whom he had become quite chummy, and Mr. Grimmer, he proceeded to the hall with the typewritten manuscript under his arm.

The rehearsals were to be conducted under the joint direction of Bob and the stage manager, and both were promptly on hand next morning at the appointed hour.

"Let's get to work," said Bob, a few minutes after his arrival at the hall. "There's a set cottage on rocks near upper entrance, right. Just put a chair there to represent the cottage, Mr. Dorkins," addressing the stage manager. "Put another to represent tavern, which is at second entrance, left. Push that small table in front of it with a chair on either side. We will now consider the stage set for the act. Let me see, Mr. Richards plays Gosport, the old fisherman. Where is Mr. Richards?"

"Here I am," said the actor engaged for second old man.

"Well, begin. You're directed to look through a telescope seaward. You rise and come down to a point about on a line with that table," said Bob. "Mrs. Parker," he added, looking at the bunch of ladies.

"Yes," said the actress in question.

"You are cast for Mrs. Meiggs, I believe. Be ready to take up your cue."

None of the ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Canfield excepted, seemed to have made any very serious effort to master their lines for the first rehearsal, and all read from their parts, more or less.

The first rehearsal was more of an informal breaking in than anything else, but for all that Bob wouldn't stand for any slop work.

Several of the performers go to squabbling over their relative positions in a certain scene, and the stage manager's efforts to straighten out the tangle only increased the jar.

Bob then interfered and called the whole bunch down.

What he said was right to the point.

He gave them to understand that he was bossing the rehearsals, and that if they didn't like his way they could quit at once and he'd get other people.

When business was over for the day, Bob quietly but decidedly gave the people to understand that he expected them to know the larger part of their lines on the following day, and they were satisfied that he meant what he said, and that they'd hear from him if they didn't come to time.

Mrs. Canfield complimented Bob on the firm way he had handled the people at the very start.

"You won't have much trouble after this," he said. "You have marked executive ability, Bob, and have the power to make people obey without necessary fuss. You will be able to accomplish far more than some stage managers who browbeat and swear at the performers. As soon as the people know you better, any grouch they may entertain against you will vanish like dew before the rising sun. Some actors are chronic kickers, but they know and recognize a master mind when they meet one. The people who are putting up the greatest howl outside now on their way home will probably turn out to be your best friends, and admirers later on."

And the actress' words turned out true.

As the rehearsals progressed the grouch that many of the professionals entertained against the young dramatist gradually wore off.

He consulted frequently with the stage manager and took all suggestions into consideration.

He permitted the two comedians and soubrette all latitude to amplify their parts, but he set his foot down on gagging, except in a few instances where it was shown to him that it was sure to improve their scene.

By the time the rehearsals were well under way he had the whole company broken to harness, and they all were now of the opinion that he was a first-class chap, even if he wasn't a professional.

Nearly all the members of the company dropped into the Broadway office after the first week to solicit advances, as their finances were at low ebb, and all got enough to see them through until the company took the road.

In a few days a bulky letter of advices was received by mail at the office, addressed to Sutton & Grimmer.

Bob and the angel were in the office at the time, chatting pleasantly together, and Sutton opened the envelope.

The letter contained useful information intended for Mr. Grimmer's instruction.

The following, relating to hotel accommodation for the people, at professional rates, Bob posted up at the hall at the next rehearsal:

Pompton House, \$2 single, \$1.75 double. Best house in town. Accommodation first-class. Free bus.

Taylor's Hotel, \$1.50 single; \$1.25 double. Patronized by the profession. Good. Free bathrooms and free bus.

Palmer House, \$1 single; 75 cents double. European plan. Restaurant, table d'hôte and à la carte. Close to depot.

To the above Mr. Grimmer added the following:

"Members of this company will report at the Erie ferry-house, foot of West Twenty-third street, Saturday morning, in time to take the 7:30 boat for Jersey City. Personal baggage must be in readiness for collection by expressman on previous afternoon."

"SUTTON & GRIMMER, Managers."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNMASKING OF A RASCAL.

When Bob appeared at the office on Thursday morning about half-past nine he was rather surprised to see George Sutton standing at the entrance of the building.

"Good-morning, Bob," he said, rather solemnly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Sutton. You're on hand early to-day. Going to the rehearsal?"

"No. I wanted to have a talk with you before Mr. Grimmer came down."

"He isn't likely to be here before one to-day. He went to a high jinks at the club last night, and I guess it was well along toward morning before he got to his downy couch."

They walked up to the office, and Sutton seated himself at the desk.

"Bob," said the angel, "I think I can trust you."

"You certainly can," replied the boy, earnestly, surprised at Sutton's words and manner.

"What do you know about Mr. Grimmer?"

"Not a great deal. You've known him longer than I have."

"A few days longer, perhaps. Look here, Bob, I've put about \$8,000 into this show so far."

"Eight thousand?"

"Yes. Every time Mr. Grimmer asked me for the cash to pay this bill or that, or advance the money for such or such a thing, I've come up without question. I know it takes considerable coin to put a good show on the road, and I wanted to back a good one or none. Last night I was introduced to a theatrical man who claimed to know a whole lot about Mr. Grimmer. What he told me took my breath away."

"What did he tell you?"

"In the first place, he said that, as a real manager, Mr. Grimmer wasn't worth the powder to blow him to pieces. He told me that Mr. Grimmer lived on the credulity of the people he caught through his advertisements. He said most of Mr. Grimmer's dupes coughed up anywhere from \$50 to \$200 for the privilege of becoming the business manager or treasurer of a show that existed only on paper, and that one young lady, now behind the counter of a department store, had transferred the whole of a \$1,500 legacy piecemeal to him under the impression that he could make a star out of her. In her case he actually did hire a company of tenth-rate professionals and put 'The Lady of Lyons' on the road, in which she was featured as Pauline, but the company was stranded somewhere out in Pennsylvania, and while Mr. Grimmer returned to the Rialto in a Pullman, the others, including the unfortunate girl, were obliged to leave their trunks for board and get back to New York as best they could."

"That was a hard reputation to give you of your partner," said Bob, not greatly surprised himself, after the hints he had received from Mr. Thacker's office boy, who seemed to know a whole lot more about Mr. Grimmer than he would give away."

"He didn't know that Mr. Grimmer was my partner."

"Did you tell him?"

"No. He went on to tell me that Mr. Grimmer had lately given such evidences of unusual prosperity that it was the talk of the Rialto that he must have caught a gudgeon with a fat wad. He said Mr. Grimmer had announced that he was putting a new and original melodrama, called 'The Red Light,' on the road, headed by a third-rate actress, known to the profession as Kittie Bertrand. He claimed it was going to be a winner, and he expected to make enough to own a bank by the time he got back. Well, the gentleman I was talking to said he felt sorry for the angel who was backing the show with his good money, as it wasn't likely he would ever get a cent back, whether the company made any money or not. He said Mr. Grimmer would take care to manipulate the expenses so that they would appear to eat up all the profits, if there were any, and that if business was not very good he would call on his backer to make up the actual or apparent deficiency, in default of which he would immediately dissolve their partnership and go it alone if the prospects warranted the risk."

"His estimate of Mr. Grimmer doesn't sound very encouraging," said Bob.

"I should say not. It makes me uneasy, for I don't like to think that I am up against such a kind of man. He certainly does present a swell appearance to what he did when I first met him. He was almost shabby then. He hasn't asked me to loan him a single dollar for his personal uses. What's the inference? That he has been making a good rake-off from the \$8,000 which I have advanced to fit out the show."

"It would look like it," admitted Bob.

At that moment there was a light tap on the door.

"Come in," said Bob.

The door opened and admitted Mrs. Canfield.

"Come right in, Miss Bertrand," said Sutton, in his genial way.

Her face was flushed, her eyes had a suspicious redness, and her step was a bit unsteady as she walked to a chair and sank into it.

Bob had never seen her look so strange before, and rather marveled at it.

"I'm afraid I'm a little off this morning," she said, in a slightly hysterical way. "I've been ill."

Sutton smiled slightly.

"You called to see Mr. Grimmer, I suppose?" he said politely.

"No," putting her hand to her throat as if something choked her, "I called to see you—and Bob. Mr. Grimmer won't be down here till afternoon. He and Gus Thacker went to the club last night, and they've got to sleep it off."

Bob and Sutton looked at each other, and then waited for the actress to proceed.

"Mr. Sutton, you have put up the money—as much as \$8,000—to start this show on the road," she said, with some hesitation.

"I have," replied Sutton, surprised at her words.

"And you have never suspected that Mr. Grimmer has been working you right along?"

"This is rather plain language, Miss Bertrand," said Sutton.

"It is the truth. It may not be to my interest, nor the interest of others concerned, to expose the trickery practiced on you, but—" she put her hand to her throat again, "I can't forget that—that you saved my sister's life."

"I saved your sister's life!" exclaimed Sutton, astonished. "What do you mean?"

"You and Bob. Last week you loaned me \$100 through Bob. Before that I appealed to Grimmer, explained the circumstances, but he turned me down. My sister was dangerously ill. She is poor—has two children, and was deserted by her husband. Money was urgently necessary to pay the doctor and other bills. To send her to a hospital in her condition was certain death. I had no money to speak of myself. When Grimmer wouldn't help me out, I went to Thacker, but he said he was broke, which was a lie. I did not know what to do. I was due at the hall for rehearsal, but I was nearly crazy, for my sister is more to me than all the world. On my way up the avenue I met Bob. He saw I looked bad and asked me what was the matter. I told him how I was fixed, and begged him to try and get the loan of a hundred from you. I asked him not to tell you why I wanted the money, if he could help it."

"He didn't tell me," said Sutton. "He asked me for the loan of \$100 for himself. He never said a word about you. I gave it to him as I would to any friend I thought a lot of."

The actress sprang up, threw her arms around Bob's neck and kissed him.

"You have been a good friend to me, Bob," she cried, half hysterically. "The money saved my sister's life. At any rate, Mr. Sutton, the money came from you, and I am grateful to you, and it shall be returned."

"How did you find all this out, Mrs. Canfield?" asked Bob.

"I have suspected his intentions from the first, and I meant to stand by you, Bob, and try and force him to do you justice."

"Thanks; but how about Mr. Sutton? Why didn't you give me a hint so I could warn him of what he was up against?"

"Because I was looking out for my own interest, as well as yours. You couldn't get your play produced without a backer, and if your play went on the road I was sure of a job, and I need one badly. Why should I say anything to frighten off the angel Grimmer had in tow, and thus spoil your chances and mine? I had no interest in Mr. Sutton until he loaned me that money through you. Besides, I did not know till last night the full measure of Grimmer's duplicity—I only suspected his methods."

Mrs. Canfield then went on to state that Grimmer and Thacker had spent a part of the previous evening at her flat before they went to the club.

She had overheard Grimmer, who was under the influence of a number of highballs, tell Thacker how he had fleeced his angel out of a considerable part of the money he had advanced to equip the show.

He had bought second-hand scenery at a bargain, had it touched up and changed it on the books as new.

Most of the properties had been gotten in the same way, brightened up and billed as made to order.

He had arranged with the printer for a stiff rake-off, which, of course, actually came out of the backer's pocket.

Altogether, he had managed to secure about \$2,000 in this manner.

He would, of course, settle with the various managers himself, and tell on to the money, rendering a statement of expenses largely in excess of the real facts.

In fact, he had everything cut and dried for swindling Sutton at every point of the game, relying for success on the young man's professional ignorance.

When Mrs. Canfield finished, Mr. Sutton was almost paralyzed with the astounding revelation.

He thanked her politely for the information she had furnished, and then told her she had better go up to the hall at once, where she would be late at the rehearsal, and tell the stage manager that Bob would not be there that day.

"I may have killed the show," she said, almost regretfully. "If I have, I am sorry for Bob's sake as well as my own; but, after what you did for me, even unknowingly, I could not let you be robbed further without putting you wise to your risk."

"Don't worry about the show, Miss Bertrand," said Sutton. "It will go out on schedule time. I shall back Bob and his play with my last dollar, if necessary. But you need not be surprised if Mr. Grimmer remains on the Rialto."

CHAPTER XV.

IN A STRUGGLE FOR FAME BOB COMES OUT ON TOP.

"Well, Bob, I seem to be up against it hard," said George Sutton, as soon as Mrs. Canfield left the office.

"You are, for a fact, and I'm dead sorry for you," replied Bob. "What are you going to do?"

"You will stand by me, of course?"

"Bet your life. To the last trump."

"Well, I've got \$12,000 left. I'm going to run the show myself."

"That would suit me to the queen's taste; but can you?"

"What's to prevent me? I can hire a good business manager, can't I?"

"You can do that, all right. But suppose Mr. Grimmer asserts his alleged right as your partner. He will probably get out an injunction against the show. Even a temporary one, until the case was argued in court, would tie us up for a week, at any rate. That would give us a black eye."

"I can head that off by having him arrested at once on the charge of swindling."

"How are you going to convict him?"

"His reputation must be pretty bad to begin with. Then Miss Bertrand's testimony—"

"Amounts to nothing. It cannot be corroborated, and he and Thacker will both swear that Mrs. Canfield imagined the conversation."

"I'll have the printer and the manager of the Jersey City storehouse put on the stand and questioned in detail about the real prices of the stuff covered by their bills. I don't imagine they'll perjure themselves under oath to oblige Mr. Grimmer."

"You could do that, I suppose," admitted Bob. "In any case, the show is likely to be stalled until the case is disposed of."

"I'm not sure about that. I want you to come with me now around to a good theatrical agency. If I can get a first-class man I'll close with him on his own terms. I'll send the show out under his direction with the understanding that you represent me until I join the company. You will act as his assistant, and at the same time keep a sharp eye out for my interests. How will that do?"

"It will do, all right. I'll see you get all that's coming to you."

Sutton pulled down the account book of the firm.

"Every cent I've paid out is down in this book, and Mr. Grimmer has been careful to procure a voucher to offset the expenditures. If I could prove in court that a number of the more important vouchers are padded, and do not represent the actual cost of the articles billed, I'd have the rascal

where the hair is short. The only way I see to get at the bottom of the swindle is to get the men who furnished the bills into court and force them to testify. I have been charged for new scenery, for one thing. Well, I could get an expert, say from the Savage establishment, to go to Jersey City, where the stuff is ready for shipment, and have him examine the scenery and pass upon its value. If it's old material touched up, he'll know the fact at a glance, and will be able to appraise its real value, and testify to that before a magistrate. I can get estimates for our paper from two or three other show-printing establishments, and use them as exhibits of overcharge. In fact, I think I will have no great difficulty in cornering Mr. Grimmer and forcing him out of the company."

After some further talk, Sutton and Bob went to a first-class dramatic agency and made inquiries for an A1 business manager.

The agent had a good one on his books and agreed to have him call on Mr. Sutton that evening at his house.

Sutton then detailed Bob to go to three show-printing houses and get estimates on the work already turned out for him, while he started for the Savage establishment to try secure a competent man to go to Jersey City to pass on the scenery and properties paid for and awaiting transportation to Pompton.

Bob finished his business satisfactorily in time to take lunch, after which he returned to the office.

There was no evidence that Mr. Grimmer had turned up yet, so Bob went on up to the hall where the company was going through the final rehearsal.

The last act was half-way through, and Bob sat back and let the stage manager direct matters as he had been doing.

At the close of the proceedings he returned to the office and found Mr. Grimmer at his desk, looking kind of seedy.

The manager asked him if he had just come from the hall, and if he had seen Mr. Sutton that day, and Bob answered "yes" to both questions.

After a short time the manager went away, but Bob waited for Sutton to show up.

That night Sutton engaged the business manager for the show, and next morning called on the printer, who admitted that the real price of the paper furnished was \$250 lower than the bill called for, which had been made out at Grimmer's request, to whom the printer returned that amount on receipt of Sutton's check.

At the angel's request he reluctantly furnished him with a signed statement admitting all the facts, and then Sutton went to the office, where he found his guilty partner.

What passed between them never came out, but it was an unpleasant interview, and entered with Grimmer's surrender and withdrawal from the firm with his ill-gotten gains to console himself with.

On Monday morning the show proceeded to Binghamton, and during the trip Bob and the performers read the flattering notice printed in the Pompton "Daily Times," where "The Red Light" had had its initial performance.

Bob's royalties for the season amounted to about \$4,500, all clear profit.

Sutton made a handsome profit himself, well up in the thousands.

During the summer Bob wrote another play, which, however, he and Sutton did not produce for another year, as "The Red Light" continued to be a winner.

Bob is now well known as a successful and famous dramatist, and his plays are much sought after by the best managers; but George Sutton, who has developed into a capable manager, has the call on anything that his friend writes.

Bob is engaged to Stella Hamilton, and they intend to be married at the close of the present season.

Although he is fairly rich, and has an assured position in the dramatic world, he says that the happiest season of his life was when he was making a struggle for fame.

Next week's issue will contain "THE YOUNG MONEY MAGNATE; OR, THE WALL STREET BOY WHO BROKE THE MARKET."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE

CURRENT NEWS

One of the greatest problems in the trenches of Europe is frost-bitten feet. Surgeons have now discovered that these are due to a fungus not unlike the fungi that make bread so mouldy. *The Scientific American* says that if chilblains be allowed to blister and the foot comes in contact with earth in which these fungi abound, a morbid condition will arise that may make amputation the only remedy.

Among the mechanical devices for re-educating the maimed or crippled limbs of soldiers that are now being used in the French hospitals, are bicycles for the arms and legs, machines for exercising the fingers and wrists, for making supple the tendons of the fore-arm, for intensifying the sense of touch in the blind, for giving practice in manipulating artificial arms and legs, besides many varieties of artificial hands specially designed for operating typewriters and tools of several kinds.

Giving beer to a mule was construed to be sufficient grounds for a charge of cruelty to animals, made against Frank W. James, a Lima junker, in Police Court before Mayor E. M. Bell, Piqua, Ohio, who imposed a fine of \$25 and costs. James had trained the animal to drink beer, and was found by the police to be exhibiting the mule for the purpose of securing drinks for himself.

In France they are preparing already for a great influx of tourists after the war. New organizations are devoting themselves to the improvement of hotels and railroad facilities, to the advertising of French health resorts, and to bettering tourists' agencies. Possibly the French Government will supervise all these efforts and sanction the imposition of new taxes on foreign visitors after the war.

The Nippon Yusen Kaisha, Japan's largest steamship company, has concluded an agreement with the South American Emigration Union for the transportation of 20,000 Japanese emigrants to South America within four years from 1917. The company has also decided to open a regular quarterly service between Japan and South America with ships of about 6,000 tons each. They will proceed by way of South Africa; but the homeward bound route has not yet been selected.

"Try my boy for bootlegging and send him to the chain gang, Judge, but don't send him back to that reform school," was the plea made before Judge Johnson of Atlanta Ga.; by the mother of D. A. Dougherty, an eighteen-year-old boy, who was brought before the Recorder on a charge of having failed to return to the reformatory after having

been given a leave of absence to have his teeth fixed at Atlanta. His mother charged that he had been given thirty lashes and put on bread and water, and that he had been forced to work "like a dog" at the reformatory.

Almost two years ago a shopkeeper in London sent his errand boy to the bank to get change for a hundred-dollar bill. The lad returned after a while to declare that he had lost the bill on the street. As he had not had his place long, his story was not believed, and upon the case being given to the police he was convicted and sent to a house of correction for seven years. The other day a customer of the merchant's paid in the very bill he had charged the lad with embezzling, and when asked for an explanation said that he had found it on the street and carried it with him on a journey around the world. Of course steps have been taken for the boy's release from prison.

Unusual qualifications for employment were advanced by Joseph W. Forrest, Chicago, Ill., whose application was made public recently by the Illinois Free Employment Bureau. "I am a cook, housekeeper and household help in all branches of domestic service of private houses, hotels and restaurants," read the application, "dressing as a girl or woman when so employed, for my own convenience and comfort, and to make a more neat and pleasing appearance around the house." Charles W. Boyd, superintendent of the bureau, said there were countless openings for women in domestic service. Forrest, he said, was willing to become a domestic servant for \$1 a week, with the proviso that he was not to do laundry work.

"One of the most invigorating and tonic things that we have read for a long time," says the *New York Sun*, "is Quartermaster Lutsich's report to his superior officer: 'I regret, sir, to report that I had to knock down a man who wiped his hands on the flag.' The incident occurred down at the Battery, where Lutsich was on post at an open air recruiting station over which waved the Stars and Stripes. Was it a man without a country, or an anarchist, or a disloyal hyphenate who walked straight to the flag and contemptuously wiped his hands on its red, white and blue? Quartermaster Lutsich asked no questions, but instinctively sent the man reeling and down in the gutter with a blow from the shoulder. It was no case for the police. Lutsich was commander of that post and protector of the flag. He was the American Army and did his duty. Passersby instantly took in the situation and cheered him to the echo, while the offender fled precipitately and ignominiously."

ON TOP

OR

THE BOY WHO GOT THERE

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY.)

CHAPTER XVI (Continued).

"Forever!" cried Tiff, grasping the colonel's hand. "And we'll be on top yet, colonel."

"We will, my boy!" cried the colonel, with enthusiasm. "You give me inspiration. You are the right sort to get there."

Tiff took his leave of Colonel Pulsifer with tingling veins. He went back to camp and at once imparted the startling news to Tug that Col. Pulsifer had lost his fortune by a dishonest deal in stocks and had come to Wild Creek to retrieve it all.

"Gee!" exclaimed Tug, with wide open eyes, "if I had a million I'd be satisfied without risking it in Wall street. All the same, we'll do all we can to help the colonel, eh, Tiff?"

"You're right we will!" cried Tiff. "And I say, Tug, I believe that Horner is at the bottom of all this."

"Say, Tiff?"

"What?"

"I was over on your land to-day, and I saw a gang of surveyors making lines across it."

Tiff was startled.

"Making lines across my land?"

"Yes."

"Well, by whose right?"

"I dunno."

Tiff's face was flushed, and he would have expressed himself further, but just then a figure darkened the doorway. The boys saw before them a stout, pudgy man dressed in a cheviot suit with a wide shirt front, on which was a huge diamond. He wore a silk hat.

"Ah, gentlemen," said the visitor suavely, "can you tell me which of you is Mr. Tiffany Clark?"

Tug gazed at Tiff, who with an effort replied:

"That is my name, sir."

"Indeed, Mr. Clark. Well, I am pleased to meet you. My name is Caleb Lowe. I am President of the Old Sledge Mining Company. You own a lot of worthless land next to us, I believe."

Tiff's eyes flashed.

"I don't know where you get your information that it is worthless," he retorted, "unless it might be from Mr. Horner."

Caleb Lowe, the mine promotor, flushed.

"Well, it don't matter about that," he said, testily. "Put your price on it."

"There is no price!"

"What do you mean?"

"It is not for sale."

"Oh, come, come," said Lowe, testily. "Every man has his price. Perhaps you will be more ready to come to terms when I tell you something of importance. One very near and dear to you is at this moment in the sheriff's hands, charged with the murder of Job Davis. It matters not whether he is guilty or not. He will be lynched this afternoon, and only myself and our board of directors have the power to save him."

Lowe spoke slowly and with significance. Every word went into Tiff's heart like a convincing arrow. It was an inspiration that led him to guess the other's meaning, and so divine the truth.

"My father!" he cried. "You speak of my father! Tell me the truth as you value your soul's salvation! Is my father in peril?"

CHAPTER XVII.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

Caleb Lowe, president of the Old Sledge Mining Company, and scheming capitalist, showed not one line of sympathy in his puffy face. He was the personification of human selfishness and greed.

Indeed, a light of positive exultation shone in his bleary eyes. His fat, hog-like neck swelled almost to the bursting of his collar.

"You're a good guesser, young fellow," he said, bluntly. "You can see how necessary it is for you to accept my terms."

For a moment Tiff quivered between joy at the knowledge that his father was alive and present in Wild Creek, and fear and horror at the thought of his awful danger. The latter sentiment prevailed.

"You say my father is under arrest for the murder of Job Davis?"

"That is the size of it," said Lowe.

"Well, he is not guilty," said Tiff, positively. "You cannot convict him. No innocent man can be convicted."

Lowe's eyes glittered.

"Do you think so?" he said, in a low tone. "Well,

you don't know much about Western ideas. You must know that there is no law in these parts save that of physical supremacy."

"Yes," said Tiff, looking straight into the base scoundrel's eyes. "The power of mental force has never failed to vanquish the physical. My father shall not be hung for a crime of which he is innocent."

"Oh!" sneered Lowe. "Have you sufficient mental force to prevent that?"

"I think I have. While the men of the mines are rough and lawless, they are men of kind hearts and easily swayed by a sense of justice."

"It is that sense of justice that will hang your father."

"Where is my father?"

"He is in charge of the sheriff and his posse down the street here. They are only waiting the decision of Judge Lynch. A word from me will save him. Now you know the terms. I want that land. Will you name the price?"

"No!" said Tiff, in set tones. "I will never be thus forced to sell."

"Then you will see your own father hung for the sake of keeping it."

Tiff was breathing hard. The president of Old Sledge was watching him.

"Five thousand dollars for the land."

"No!"

"Six thousand."

"I will not sell."

"Ten thousand!"

"You are wasting breath."

"You little fool!" snapped Lowe. "You are cutting off your nose to spite your face. What is your price?"

"I have no price," said Tiff, putting on his hat. "Stand from the door, sir. I am going to save my father from this cowardly plot of yours. If there is justice in Wild Creek I will call for it now."

"It is of no use," said Lowe, savagely. "You cannot save him. I have given you the last chance. Let him hang! We'll get the land in the end anyhow. You'll be glad to give it to us yet."

But Tiff flung himself past the villain. Tug was close at his heels.

"Go easy, Tiff," admonished the street boy as he ran on beside Tiff. "You will catch more flies with sugar than salt."

But Tiff, with wildly beating heart and white face, rushed on. They should not, they could not hang his father. He was not guilty. It should all be made plain to the miners of Wild Creek. He trusted their sense of fair play.

Then he saw the great crowd congregating in front of the hotel. There was the tall pine from whose limb many a malefactor or victim of border justice had hung.

A rope was already over the limb. He saw Bill Blake, a self-constituted Judge Lynch, addressing the crowd.

And then he saw his father. Tiff knew him even

at that distance. That firm-built figure, that handsome, kindly face, now pale and set with hopelessness, belonged to his own father.

Julius Clark, long a fugitive from the law, had fallen into the hands of the worst administrators of justice he had yet faced.

His life hung in the balance.

The evidence had been briefly given, and was conclusive. He had been caught spending some of the gold-dust known to belong to Job Davis at the backwoods store. In fact, Job's own name was printed on the bag.

"Before heaven, gentlemen!" asserted Julius Clark, "I am not guilty. That bag of gold-dust was given to me in payment for a Winchester rifle by a man whom I had never seen before, at Coyote Creek, day before yesterday. I can prove it by the storekeeper up there."

"You have heard the plea of the prisoner," thundered Blake, who officiated as Judge Lynch. "You have heard the charge against him, and the evidence. Now, I don't want the responsibility of judging him guilty. I leave it to you what his fate shall be."

A great roar went up from the crowd.

"Hang him! He's a murderer! String him up, sheriff!"

But now there was a commotion in the crowd. Through the throng there burst a lithe, boyish figure.

"Father!" cried Tiff, wildly. "Don't you see me? Don't you know who I am? It's Tiff, your own son! I have come to save you!"

The next moment Tiff had burst through the guard and embraced his father. Julius swayed and tottered, and then threw his arms about his son.

"Tiff!" he groaned. "Oh, Tiff! What brought you here?"

"I think it was heaven's own goodness, father," cried Tiff. "I am here to save you——"

"See here, young feller," interposed burly Bill Blake. "you're interfering with justice. Git away from here. Bring up that rope, boys."

Rough hands were laid on Tiff. But he flung them off and faced the crowd like a young lion at bay.

"You shall not hang this man!" he shouted fiercely. "He is not guilty! He is my father. You all know me, and that I am on the square. Oh, men! have mercy and give fair play. If you hang an innocent man his blood will be forever on your heads."

Tiff's impassioned words for a moment swayed the crowd. Miners are like sheep, ready to follow a leader. There was conviction in the brave boy's words, there was a light in his eyes that held them.

"Ye say he's yer father?" demanded Blake.

"Yes."

"Waal, I'm sorry for ye, but he was found with the evidence on him——"

(To be continued.)

FACTS WORTH READING

CANAL OPEN TO ARMED SHIPS.

The State Department has replied to Japan's request for information as to whether armed merchant ships would be permitted to pass through the Panama Canal by sending the Japanese Embassy a copy of the Department's instructions to American port authorities.

The reply is a virtual admission that armed ships will be permitted to use the canal subject to the same regulations that now govern their admission to American ports. The Department's instructions distinguish carefully between ships armed for offensive purposes and those armed only for defense.

IMPRISONED IN BIG TANK

Deacon Elliott D. Bronson, of Winchester, Conn., who is also the town's forest fire warden, while making repairs at the top of a ten-foot water tank which crowns a windmill on his barn, the other afternoon lost his balance and fell in. His weight broke the ice covering the four feet of water in the tank and he was held a prisoner in the chilly water for one hour and a half.

His cries for help were in vain until near supper hour, when a member of his family went outdoors to call him, and discovered his predicament. He was rescued with ladders and ropes.

CORBETT TO BUY RACING STABLE.

James J. Corbett, former champion pugilist of the world, announced that he had determined to enter the thoroughbred racing game. To this end he visited John E. Madden's Hamburg Place Farm, Lexington, Ky., and took options on three of the most promising youngsters, which will be trained for fall racing.

Corbett said he was connected with friends in New York and New Orleans who were not ready for their names to be known, but they owned eight thoroughbreds. The firm will campaign their string on Kentucky tracks, New York, Havre de Grace and New Orleans.

BURGLARS SET TWO FIRES.

Fire, believed to have been set by burglars to hide their work, did \$3,000 damage recently in the apartment of Sigmund Lang on the fifth floor of the Switzerland, No. 740 Riverside Drive, New York.

Charles Schmidt, a tenant on the same floor, smelled smoke and caused the superintendent to send in an alarm. When firemen arrived they found all of the doors locked, and were compelled to force one to gain an entrance.

When the flames had been subdued Battalion Chief Weber discovered that fire had been set in two places in a mattress in the bedroom and in a linen closet

in the dining-room. Bureau drawers had been pulled out and thrown about the floor, chairs were overturned and glassware broken.

Deputy Fire Marshal Flynn, who is investigating, said the blaze undoubtedly was incendiary.

Mr. and Mrs. Lang had gone to Atlantic City to spend a few days.

STOLEN GEMS DUG UP.

Jewelry and silver worth \$500 was found buried in a field at Wyomissing, a suburb of Reading, Pa., recently, while excavations were being made for a house. Irvin F. Impink of Wyomissing started investigation.

The name Castner was on the jewelry. Mr. Impink noticed a newspaper account of an accident in which Catherine Castner, a child, was killed by an automobile, and wrote to the father of the child, Samuel J. Castner, a Philadelphia photographer. Mr. Castner said that the jewelry did not belong to him.

A close examination disclosed on the jewelry the word "Tennessee." Mr. Castner told of relatives residing in that State, and Mr. Impink corresponded with Mrs. Catherine Castner of Tennessee, who was spending the winter in Winston-Salem, N. C. She identified the jewelry as some stolen from her, and it was sent to her.

HOW TO KILL HOUSE FLIES.

In recent public health reports the following suggestions are made for the destruction of house flies:

Formaldehyde and sodium salicylate are the two best muscicides, according to Earle B. Phelps and Albert F. Stevenson; both are superior to arsenic from many viewpoints. For household use, according to the writers, solutions of these agents may be prepared by the addition of three tablespoonfuls of either the 40 per cent. solution of formaldehyde found on the market, or the powdered sodium salicylate to a pint of water.

"Nearly fill a glass tumbler with the solution, place over this a piece of blotting paper cut to circular form and somewhat larger in diameter than the tumbler, and over this invert a saucer. Invert the whole device and insert a match or toothpick under the edge of the tumbler to allow access of air. The blotting paper will remain in the proper moist condition until the entire contents of the tumbler have been used, and the strength of the formaldehyde solution will be maintained. A little sugar sprinkled upon the paper will increase the attractiveness of the poison for the flies.

"Either of these preparations may be safely used where there are young children, although the addition of the sugar is not recommended in such cases."

GOOD AS WHEAT

OR

THE BOY WHO WAS ALL RIGHT

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY.)

CHAPTER IX (Continued).

"Heer's ther leetle chap whut is all right," said Billock. "How air ye thus evenin', sonny?"

"I'm all right; how are you?"

"Good ez wheat, sonny, ther same ez yerself," with a chuckle.

"And you?" to Boggett.

"I'm all right, sonny; I'm allers all right."

"That's good. Then, lowering his voice, he continued: "I want to see you men on private and partitcular business. Will you come with me?"

"Shore!" said Billock.

Boggett nodded assent.

"Then come," and Bob started out of the bar-room.

The two men got up and followed him, and as soon as they were out of the room a dark-faced, evil-looking man, who had been watching the three during the brief colloquy, got up and left the room and slouched along behind them. He was careful, however, not to attract their attention.

"Whar ye takin' us ter, sonny?" asked Billock.

"To the house where I am boarding."

"Oh, that's et, hey?"

"Yes."

"Thort mebbly ye wuz takin' us out sumwhars ter hol' us up, hey, Bill?"

Boggett laughed.

"I thort uv that myse'f, Hank," he said.

"My intentions are exactly the opposite to that," said Bob; "I am going to put you in the way of making something."

"Then we're yer men," declared Billock.

They were soon at the Wilson home, and Bob conducted them into the house and introduced them to Sam and Mrs. Wilson and the girls.

The two big rough fellows were evidently ill at ease in the company of the women folks, and Mrs. Wilson, recognizing this fact, said to the girls:

"We'll go out into the other room; Bob and Sam want to talk business with the gentlemen."

The three went into the kitchen and closed the door, and Hank and Bill drew long breaths of relief.

"Now whut is et that ye want with us, sonny?" asked Billock.

Bob plunged into the matter at once and told the

whole story, the two men listening with evident interest.

"Whar's ther map?" asked Billock, when they had heard all.

Bob drew it from his pocket and handed it to Hank.

The big fellow opened the paper, and he and Boggett looked at the drawing eagerly.

Bob and Sam were watching the two, and so neither of them saw a dark, evil-looking face pressed against the window only a few feet from where they sat.

"I know that kentry up thar purty well," said Billock; "but I hain't never seen that lake."

"Et's ther same with me," said Boggett.

"But you could find it?" said Bob, eagerly.

"Ef et's thar we kin, sonny."

"Well, don't you think it is there?"

"Mebbe et is. I kinder think so."

"Et could be, all right, fur that's er rough kentry," said Boggett.

"Very well; now for my proposition: If you two will go up there with Sam and me and look for the gold mine I will agree that, if we find it, you shall share in the gold the same as we two. In other words, what we find shall be divided into four equal portions, one for each of us. What do you say?"

"I'm willin'. Whut d'ye say, Bill?"

"I'm in fur et. I'm gittin' tired uv stayin' heer, ennyhow, an' am longin' fur freedom."

"Then it is settled?"

"Yas."

"Ye bet."

The four then discussed their plans, and decided on what would be needed for the trip. Also it was settled that they should start on the day after tomorrow morning.

They were to each have a horse to ride, and two pack horses, on which would be carried their picks, shovels and provisions.

When all had been settled Hank and Bill bade the boys good-night and took their departure.

As they stepped out into the open air the owner of the evil-looking face that had been pressed against the window-pane all the time their interview was in progress slipped around the corner of the house and hastened away into the night.

Mrs. Wilson and the two girls came back into the sitting-room and asked eagerly what luck the boy had had with the two men.

"Best in the world," said Bob; "they're going with us."

They talked an hour or so more and then Sam went home and the members of the Wilson family went to bed.

Next day the boys and their two allies bought horses—Sam's father, who was pretty well-to-do, lending them the money—and mining implements, weapons and provisions and all was ready by evening for an early start next morning.

The boys were up early and ate a hearty breakfast—which last was more than could be said for Lucy and Kittie, who were very sober and blue-looking—and then came the good-bys.

Mrs. Wilson told the boys good-by first, and gave the cautionary advice, and then she went out into the kitchen to work, leaving the young couples to say good-by in their own way.

Bob placed his arm around Lucy's waist, pressed her to him, looked down into her eyes, and said tenderly:

"Lucy, I am not quite twenty years old yet, and I would not say what I am going to do were it not for the fact that I am going away, and there is a bare chance that I may never return; so under the circumstances I think I am justified in not putting it off till I am of age. I love you, dear, and want you to promise me to be my wife some day. Will you do it?"

The girl's eyes drooped, a flush of joy stole up over her face, and she whispered:

"Yes, Bob."

Then he kissed her again and again, pressed her to his heart, said "Good-by, little sweetheart!" and hastened out of the house.

After him came Sam, who, need I say it, had gone through exactly the same performance as Bob had.

Ten minutes later they had joined Billock and Boggett at the appointed starting time, and ten minutes after that the four rode out of Silverton and headed away toward the distant Mogollon Mountains, where strange and thrilling adventures awaited them.

And half an hour later three evil-faced men, armed to the teeth, rode out of town and headed in the direction taken by the four gold-seekers.

One of the three was the owner of the villainous face that had been pressed against the window-pane of the Wilson house the evening Bob and Sam held the interview with Billock and Boggett.

The four adventurous gold-seekers were riding into unknown dangers ahead of them and were threatened with danger from behind—were between two fires, so to speak. But fortunately, perhaps, they did not as yet know this.

CHAPTER X.

BOGGETT RECONNOITERS.

"So you think that we must be almost there, Hank?"

"Yaas, Bob. Et's my guess thet ther lake an' islan' air within ten miles uv us, ef they're on top uv this heer footstool at all."

"Then it's up to us to find them."

"Thet's right, son."

"I suppose we will remain in camp here, while we are searching for the lake?"

"Yaas; this is ez good er place fur er camp ez enny we could fin', I guess."

It was evening. The little party of gold-seekers had been five days on the trail, and now they were encamped on a little plateau in the edge of the Mogollon mountains.

There was plenty of grass, and a clear stream of water ran across the plateau, which made this a fine place for a camp.

They had plenty of provisions, and there was a chance that they might be able to kill some wild game, which would be a welcome change from the canned foods they had been eating.

The four were eating their supper.

They had no campfire, for they were in the land of the deadly Apaches and did not dare take the risk of attracting the attention of the redskins by sending up smoke.

It was not yet dark, but the sun was down and dusk was coming on.

After supper was over, the four threw themselves down on their blankets, and Billock and Boggett lighted their pipes and smoked, but were careful to keep their hands over the tops of the bowls, to keep the glow of the burning tobacco from being seen, in case there were enemies about.

Suddenly all were startled by hearing a voice—where it came from they did not know—call out:

"Back, intruders! Go back to your homes! Death awaits you in these mountains if you stay here another day! Be warned, and go back!"

"Thunder!" gasped Billock.

"Whar's ther speechifier?" growled Boggett.

Bob and Sam were silent. They were startled and amazed, and did not know what to think.

"Sumbuddy hez tumbled ter ther fac' thet we're here, all right," said Billock.

"An' whoever he is, he's tryin' fur ter skeer us off," from Boggett.

"Thet's so."

"But he can't do it," said Bob. "We are not going back, are we?"

"Not jest yit!" growled Billock. "We're goin' ter see this heer thing through, ye bet!"

"Not much we hain't!" from Boggett.

"You will not be molested to-night; but if you are here at noon to-morrow, your blood will be upon your own heads!" came the mysterious voice.

"He's still at et!" snorted Billock.

(To be continued.)

TIMELY TOPICS

WON A BRIDE CHASING GUERRILLAS.

While searching for Mosby's guerrillas Lieutenant John Hutchinson, commanding a cavalry company, stopped at a Virginia farm house and asked a pretty girl for a glass of water. That girl is now his wife. The story of their romance was told a few days ago at the celebration of their golden wedding at their home in Hempstead.

Mrs. Hutchinson was Miss Lida Dutton, of Waterford, London County, Virginia. After making her acquaintance the young lieutenant was captured by the Confederates and sent to Libby Prison. During the war Miss Dutton worked as a nurse among the sick and wounded soldiers. She became the bride of the lieutenant a year after peace was declared.

BUY CANADIAN PAPER MILL.

According to advices received at the Department of Commerce, American interests are going to Canada to obtain control of paper mills and pulp lands. One purchase, involving \$3,000,000, has just been announced. The Partington Pulp and Paper Company, of St. John, N. B., has sold its mill and timber lands to interests in this country.

The report states that the purchase includes 372,000 acres of spruce and fir wood and 1,000,000 feet of hardwood. The entire tract of timber land comprises nearly 30,000,000 cords of wood. The purchasers are said to be incorporating a new company which proposes to increase the output of the Partington sulphite mill from sixty to eighty tons of bleached sulphite pulp daily.

AUTO BANDITS GET \$10,000.

Three masked highwaymen the other day held up an express messenger at Tarentum, near Pittsburgh, and robbed him of \$10,000, the payroll of the Flaccus Glass Company. The money had been sent from here by rail, and upon its receipt at Tarentum was transferred to an automobile of the glass company.

As the machine was passing through the village it was sideswiped by a large touring car and stopped. Immediately a man with a handkerchief over his face jumped on the running board, and pointing a revolver at the express messenger, ordered him to hand out the money. He then demanded the magnet key of the automobile, and with the revolver still covering the messenger and chauffeur, backed to his own machine, in which were two other men. They drove quickly away.

The alarm was given, and soon afterward a report reached Pittsburgh that the robbers' automobile had been seen near Butler, Pa. A heavily armed posse immediately left here in automobiles.

A TURTLE FARM.

Japan might well be called the land of infinite detail. Perhaps nowhere on earth may one see detail carried to such extremes as in that land, where every available square foot of soil must be made to yield every possible return. Farms of one or two acres, producing six, eight, ten or a dozen different crops, are common sights, the soil being fertilized and handled in such a manner as to bring results every month of the year.

One peasant who obtained some overflowed land, turned what in this country would be waste ground, to profit, reports the *Washington Star*. Converting the marshy overflow into ponds, he bred and raised snapping turtles, which in Japan are considered as much of a delicacy as diamond back terrapin here. The farm now produces tens of thousands of the snapping turtles annually, these being shipped to Tokio and Yokohama markets by the ton.

Certain of the ponds are set apart as breeding grounds for the turtles, and once a day men go carefully along the banks with little wire baskets with which they cover all newly deposited turtle eggs. Sometimes thousands of the wire baskets are in sight at one time, marking the places where the eggs lie and preventing the turtles from scratching the earth from them.

Hatching consumes from forty to sixty days, according to the weather. The young, as soon as they appear, are put in separate small ponds, and are fed with finely chopped fish. They eat this during September and October, and late in the latter month burrow in the mud for the winter, coming out in April or May.

Most of them are sold in the market when they are from three to five years old, at which time they are most delicate.

Japan has also a pearl oyster farm. In the Bay of Ago there has been established a plantation from which a harvest is obtained.

In May or June stones weighing from six to eight pounds are sunk in shallow water, and in August the tiny shells begin to appear on them. The stones remain for two months, but since the young oysters cannot endure cold, in November all rocks in less than five feet of water are moved farther out, where the temperature is more even. At the end of three years, when the shells are about two inches across, they are taken from the water, nuclei for pearls inserted in them, and replaced in the water, thirty of them to every square six feet of bottom.

There they are left for four years. Then, being seven and a half years old, they are removed and searched for pearls.

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Good Current News Articles

The Russian government plans to build a canal connecting the Volga and Don rivers, which will play an important part in the development of south-eastern Russia and the Volga and Don basins. Engineers have been appointed to carry out surveys and consider questions connected with the execution of the project.

Vice-President and General Manager E. W. Hammons of the Educational Film Corporation of America has appointed Bert Adler as New York manager of that concern. Mr. Adler is a pioneer in the giving of children's shows and has been interested in straight educational film work for a number of months. He was for many years advertising and sales manager of the Thanhouser Film Corporation, New Rochelle, N. Y.

The Italians are using a new aerial torpedo which is said to exceed in effectiveness any other ever produced. It is about the size of a 12-inch shell, but is loaded with a much larger charge of a very high explosive. The effect of its explosion is to reduce to crumbs even the barbed wire entanglements within a wide radius. Men 200 feet from the center of the explosion are thrown to the ground bleeding from the nose and ears simply from shock.

Edgar R. Bruton, of Moultrie, Ga., says that he is afraid he is going crazy if he doesn't find some way to stop counting strokes of his razor when he shaves. Several months ago he decided that he would see how many strokes it took to shave. He counted, shaving in his usual way, and found that he used too many. Then he set about systematically to reduce the number. Counting each time he shaved and eliminating the useless strokes he managed at the end of a few months to cut the daily operation down. But now he has found that he can't keep from counting.

There are large deposits of iron in New Zealand, much of it being found in iron sand at Taranaki, near New Plymouth, on the North Island, where several attempts have been made to produce pig iron in commercial quantities, beginning as early as 1848. All were without success, with the possible exception of a plant just completed, which has turned out a few tons of excellent pig iron. It is said that the pig iron produced at different times in this section of New Zealand from iron sand is of very high quality, samples having been sent to England to be tested. Imports of iron into New Zealand for the year 1914 amounted to 10,805 tons, of which the United States supplied 85 tons, while the United Kingdom supplied 9,284 tons.

Grins and Chuckles

Cashier (coughing)—Pardon me, I didn't catch your last name. Ethel (blushing)—I haven't caught it yet myself.

Lawyer—I really hope I don't annoy you with all these questions? Fair Client—Not at all. I'm used to it. I have a six-year-old son.

Ikey (who has been reading)—Fader, can anybody get rich beyond der dreams of afarics? His Father—I t'ink not, Ikey. Afarics vos a putty good dreamer.

New Clerk—I think I understand the business pretty well now. Employer—Yes? Keep at it four or five years. Perhaps you'll understand it then as well as you think you do now.

"If your wife treats you so shamefully," said Henpeck's friend, "why don't you get a divorce from her?" "I did want to," replied Henpeck, "but she said 'no,' and of course that settled it."

"Who are your best patients, doctor?" was asked. "The people who are always contending that life isn't worth living," replied the doctor without the slightest hesitation.

"What authority have you for the statement that Shakespeare is immortal?" "The fact that he still survives after having been murdered by bum actors for three hundred years."

"We all have our burdens to bear," remarked the minister. "Life at best is but a series of trials." "I don't mind the trials, parson," said Senator Smoothguy. "It's the convictions that hurt."

"Pa?" "Well, what is it now?" "My teacher says I'm a natural born fool." "Your teacher is a sensible woman, and that's what I've always said. I suppose she had to explain to you what a natural born fool was." "Yes, pa. She said it was hereditary."

SANDY BLYTHE'S MURDER

By Kit Cylde.

"Have ye seen Sandy the morn, mates?"

"No; nor willee see 'un; a's faa'en doon ta pit."

"Who says so?"

"Joe Chappel's lads saw him go by there last night," spoke up another man, "an' he ain't been seen since."

It was during a sojourn in the mining districts of England that I heard the above conversation.

The men were talking about a man who had mysteriously disappeared from their midst.

Sandy Blythe was a miner, and well thought of by all the men, and his disappearance set the gossips to talking.

Sandy did not turn up all that day, and on the next day his body was found in an old deserted pit.

He may have fallen into it in the dark, the opening not being guarded.

There was a discolored spot upon the left temple caused, as many supposed, by sudden contact with the rocks.

It may have been a bruise, I don't deny that, but it was something more.

It showed where a pistol shot had been fired.

I said nothing about it, but I discovered the hole where the bullet had entered, and found traces of gunpowder upon the skin.

I went about among the simple rustics, talking casually upon the one exciting topic of the day—they never have more than one, these benighted folk, and luckily they don't, for their poor brains would be more befuddled than they are if they had two things to think of at once.

I found that Sandy was universally liked, and hadn't an enemy in the world.

By and by it came out that the man had had a large sum of money with him that night.

There was nothing to be seen or heard of it.

There was the motive, I said to myself, robbery was the underlying cause of this affair.

Someone had found out that he had the money, and in attempting to take it from him had met with resistance.

The inevitable result followed.

The robber was determined, the other man too weak, and consequently, in trying to save his gold, lost his life.

I went down into the pit and made observations.

A stout rope sufficed to let me down, and a torch gave me all the light I wanted.

I made one or two important discoveries.

First I found a pistol, an odd sort of affair—one of the old-fashioned sort.

This had evidently been thrown down the pit, the owner thinking that it would never be found.

It had been recently discharged, and I had no doubt whatever that it was the very weapon used to kill Sandy.

I came across the man's wallet also, but of course there was nothing in it.

There were stains upon it as if it had been seized by a man with a cut hand. Sandy, of course, had been the one who had made the stains. His hands had been cut, and he had naturally kept a tight grip on his wallet.

"I wonder if he could have had a knife of his own?"

These was my mental observations as I studied over the matter. I searched long and searchingly, but could not find the knife.

Then I asked the man's wife if he ever had carried one.

She said he had a clasp-knife with a horn handle, upon which the letters "A. B." standing for Alexander or "Sandy" Blythe, had been cut with a knife.

I determined to look for that knife at once.

I showed the woman the pistol I had found, and asked her if she had ever seen it.

She said that it was the very image of one Jack Brace had, and she knew nobody else that possessed firearms of any kind, except old rusty muskets.

"Your husband used to go to the tavern often?" I asked.

"Aye, too much. He fancied Molly Bruce more'n I liked."

"The tavern-keeper's daughter?"

"Na, but his wife; she wur ower too good fur Jock, an' he was as jealous as a Turk. Tell truth, I did not like Sandy goin' there so much, though he ne'er ran up a score. He paid his way as he went. The lads tell me he wur ower attentive to Jock's wife."

"Was the sum of money large, which he was bringing home?"

"Ay, more'n a hundred pun."

"Do you suppose Jack knew of it?"

"Very like. Sandy would tell o' anything when in liquor."

"Somebody has overheard him talking about his money and has murdered him for it, that's the whole matter."

I did suppose that the woman would be discreet enough to hold her tongue, but here I was disappointed.

Whoever yet knew a woman, and particularly an uneducated one, to hold her tongue after she had become possessed of a secret? It would be an impossibility.

The whole village knew in an hour that I had said Sandy had been murdered.

They then came to the conclusion that he had been; but as for being able to discover that without being told of it, they would never have done it, for they were as stupid as the very stones.

It was lucky I had not said that I thought Jack Brace had murdered the man; for if I had it would have got to his ears at once. He would have taken to flight, and I should have lost my prey.

I went up to his place to drink and chat, and kept my eyes open all the time.

After two or three visits I used to stay a long time, and was almost given the run of the place, being a good customer and paying well for everything I had.

One day I saw Jack's wife peeling potatoes for dinner, with a large clasp-knife, which was handier for this purpose than an ordinary kitchen knife.

She laid it down when she had finished, and while she went to the well to draw more water I picked it up.

The handle was horn, and the letters "A. B." were cut into it. It was Sandy Blythe's knife.

"That accounts for the cut I saw on the back of Jack's hand," I said to myself.

"Where did you get this knife?" I asked. "It's one I lost a month ago."

"Jack found it, I guess; I came across it the other day under the bar, all rusty."

I heard a suppressed oath, and looking around, discovered that Jack had entered.

"Do you know that this is Sandy Blythe's knife?" I said. "And do you know what people will think if they see it in your possession?"

"I don't care what they think. I didn't murder him!"

"Come—come, my man, your game's up," I said; "you know you killed Sandy Blythe for his money, and so do I. You tried killing him with his own knife, and then finding that would not do you shot him."

"Curse you Americans!" he said, with an oath. "You find out everything, but you shall not catch me."

He bounded out of the door, but he escaped into one of the outbuildings, and got away through some hole in the wall; at any rate he escaped.

I put officers on his track, and we followed up every clew, but to no purpose.

The steamers and railroads were watched, and it would have been impossible for anyone to have got away by such means without our knowing it.

I became satisfied that Jack was still in the neighborhood, and that he visited his wife occasionally, and I determined to catch him.

Procuring the disguise of an old crone, I hovered about the place, and by degrees gained the confidence of Jack's wife.

I would sit in the little kitchen behind the tap-room, and sipping a mug of hot punch which Jack's wife herself brewed, would talk and croak and gossip and keep the lone woman company, all the while watching for any signs of Jack's coming.

I knew he visited the house at regular intervals, but I never could manage to see him, and at last I grew desperate.

I never stayed there late, but one night I did, remaining in the tap-room asleep, or rather pretending to be asleep.

Jack's wife came to me when she was about closing the place, and tried to wake me up.

She was unsuccessful, and finally desisted.

"It makes no differ, for she's deafer'n a post," she said, "an' won't hear us. She might as well stay as not; it's a bleak night out."

She went away, and after a little while I heard a whistle outside, and someone was admitted.

I did not doubt for an instant that it was Jack, and soon afterwards I thought I heard voices, but could not tell whether his was one or not.

I determined to find out, and made my way cautiously toward the kitchen.

Unfortunately, I overturned a little cricket, and the noise alarmed the occupants of the kitchen.

When I reached it there was no one to be seen but Jack's wife.

"So ye've awoke, have ye, Mother Madge?" she said. "Ye'll no go home the night; it's too wild an' bleak."

"Ye've had company," I said, pointing to the settle in front of the fire, where lay a long-stemmed clay pipe.

It had been only just laid down, the fire not having gone out of it, and the odor of tobacco was still in the room.

"One o' the men must have left his pipe here," she said, somewhat agitated.

"It was Jack Brace, I'll bet a copper," I said.

The woman stared, and I heard the sound of a hiss behind me.

I turned quickly and saw the door of a closet shut.

"Your husband has been here, woman, and the officers of the law are after him. I could give him up."

She fell upon her knees at my feet, and with a look of terror seized my hands and begged me to spare her husband.

"I know ye now," she said. "Ye're no auld mither, but a man, a police chap."

"Then he dies!" cried a voice, and Jack flew out and attacked me.

He did not know that I had been prepared for just such a movement. Throwing his wife between us, knowing that he would not harm her, I whipped out my revolver, and commanded him to drop his weapons.

He did so, but when I went to handcuff him he showed fight and made me a great deal of trouble.

I was obliged to crack him over the head with my revolver, and while he was still insensible I handcuffed him and carried him away on my back, having thrown off the skirts of Mother Madge.

He was tried for the murder of Sandy Blythe, and was convicted, and afterward confessed the whole crime.

Sandy's money had tempted him to kill him, and he never supposed for an instant that the crime would be discovered and traced to him.

The money was restored, and Jack was sentenced to be hanged, but this was afterward changed to imprisonment for life.

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

OSTRICH PULLS AN AUTOMOBILE.

For the purpose of deciding a wager regarding the strength of an ostrich, a bird from a California ostrich farm was harnessed to an automobile to see if it was able to pull so heavy a load. About its neck and breast was placed an ingenious harness which was hitched to the axle of a merium-sized car. In the first trials the trainer, who rode on the back of the bird, kept a sack over its head, and the creature refused to pull. But when the sack was removed it strained at the harness and soon was pulling the automobile along the boulevard, up a slight grade. The bird did not stop until commanded.

MELTING CHINESE COINS FOR COPPER.

A serious situation in Chinese monetary matters is being developed by the export from China, particularly to Japan, of Chinese brass "cash," the characteristic coins with square holes in the center that have been the basis of trade in the interior of China for many generations. The rise in the price of copper has rendered these brass coins, which usually contain about 89 per cent. of copper, more valuable as metal than as a medium of exchange.

For a time over 6,000 tons of the coins were exported monthly to Japan alone. A fall in the price of copper reduced shipments to about half this quantity, but the export continues and now at various points in the interior of China the number of cash in circulation is far below the requirements of the people, and difficulty is being experienced in carrying on ordinary trade. In parts of South China, Chinese one-cent pieces now exchange for only five cash, instead of ten cash that usually is considered a standard rate of exchange. The cash have been bringing about \$25 local currency, or something like \$12.50 gold, per picul of 133 1-3 pounds. In Japan they have been valued at the equivalent of \$15 gold. Japanese newspapers report that the refined copper is being exported to the United States.

The business of buying up and melting these coins has been so large and so profitable that a monopoly thereof was one of the considerations proposed for a recent Chino-Japanese loan. The fact that a single Japanese firm is in the market for 3,000,000 piculs (200,000 short tons), indicates something of the enormous quantity of such coins in China. At the same time the monetary requirements of a vast population like that of China are in proportion, and the melting up of such coins disturbs the balance of supply and demand. The first effect will be to increase prices locally in terms of cash—the medium on which Chinese production of goods for export primarily is based—and it is likely

therefore to have a marked effect on foreign exports. We can well imagine the hostility engendered should foreigners attempt to corner for commercial use coins of the United States; yet China has only just awakened.

FIVE YOUTHS SWING \$100,000 DEAL.

Five young men, all under twenty-five, and lately out of Columbia College, where they were close friends, put through a shipping deal which they expect will net them a profit of considerably more than \$100,000. They found their opportunity in the imperative demand for tonnage on the part of the Allies, which has made it not only possible but necessary to transform pleasure yachts into freighters for trans-Atlantic service.

Walter Dwyer, who is a shipping broker, conceived the deal. He heard that the yacht Nirvana, built in 1902 for Senator Nelson W. Aldrich and recently purchased by Rodman Wanamaker, could be bought at a reasonable price. The Nirvana is a twin-screw steam yacht, 22 feet over all, with a 700-ton capacity. Her fittings at the time she was put in commission were among the most magnificent known.

On December 14, when lying in Gravesend Bay, she caught fire in the bow and sustained damages estimated at \$10,000. To repair the vessel as a pleasure yacht would have required considerable expense, and it is understood that Mr. Wanamaker preferred to build another vessel of a more modern type.

Dwyer knew that another yacht in the same class, which cost \$250,000 to build, had been sold to the French government for use as a trans-Atlantic freighter only a few days ago at a price currently reported to be more than \$800,000. The cost of repairs to the Nirvana, if she were to be rebuilt as a freighter, would be considerably less than the sum needed to put her back into shape as a pleasure yacht, and Dwyer estimated that she could be so remodeled as to carry 800 or 900 tons of freight.

He called upon four of his college friends—William Rosenblatt, an importer; Lawrence Steinhardt, and Eugene Untermeyer, attorneys, and Llewellyn Roberts. The five got together and raised the money required for the purchase, and the yacht changed hands recently. Within a few hours after the deal had been completed the five new owners refused an offer which would have given them a clear profit of more than \$75,000, and they expect to be able to dispose of the yacht before long at a price which will give them a very much larger profit out of the transaction.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

BIG BEAR BY EXPRESS.

Expressmen are not familiar, as a rule, with the delicate task of handling black bears, and to assure proper treatment for one that passed through Fort Worth, Tex., recently instructions were posted on the side of the cage. They read:

"A pan and sprinkling pot accompanies the shipment. See that the bear is watered as often as possible and given two loaves of bread daily. If the weather is warm, take a hose and sprinkle the bear."

And this in big letters:

"Bears are wild and dangerous. Keep people away from the cage."

The bear was consigned from a Government agent at Yellowstone Park to Ray Lambert, Commissioner of Sanitation, at San Antonio.

It took eight expressmen to transfer the cage from one express car to another. All the while the bear was keeping up such a roar and fight that travelers risked missing their trains to watch the performance.

A LIFEBOAT BUOY.

A life buoy, capable of sheltering forty persons, has been on exhibition recently in the Willamette River at Portland, Ore. It is intended as a substitute for and resembles a huge top. Entrance is gained through a trapdoor, which is water-tight when closed. The buoy is intended to be kept on a vessel's deck, and if in time of danger there is no opportunity to launch it, passengers need only get inside and wait for it to take the water as the boat sinks. The upper portion is fitted with windows and serves as a conning tower, where lights or other distress signals can be displayed. A storage battery supplies current for lights, and for a ventilating fan that periodically expels air through a vent in the tower, says *Popular Mechanics*. The vent can be regulated by a person acting as a lookout. Circular tiers of seats are provided for the occupants. There is also space for storing water and provisions enough to last a week or ten days. The anchor consists of three heavy pipes which telescope one within the other, and can be drawn up by a winch. The lower end of the anchor is filled with cement for ballast.

GHOSTLY TREAD OF BIG MOOSE.

Although taller than an ordinary horse, weighing more than half a ton, and adorned with wide-spreading antlers, the bull moose stalks with ghostly silence through the thickest forests, where man can scarcely move, without being betrayed by the loud crackling of dry twigs. In summer it loves low-lying, swampy forests interspersed with shallow lakes and sluggish streams. In such places it often wades up to its neck

in a lake to feed on succulent water plants, and when reaching to the bottom becomes entirely submerged. These visits to the water are sometimes by day, says the *National Geographic Magazine*, but usually at night, especially during the summer season when the calves are young and the horns of the bulls are but partly grown.

Late in the fall, with full-grown antlers, the bulls wander through the forest looking for their mates, at times uttering far-reaching calls of defiance to all rivals, and occasionally clashing their horns against the saplings in exuberance of masterful vigor. Other bulls at times accept the challenge and hasten to meet the rival for a battle royal. At this season the call of the cow moose also brings the nearest bulls quickly to her side. Hunters take advantage of this, and by imitating the call through a birch-bark trumpet bring the most aggressive bulls to their doom.

LOOKING FOR BURIED POT OF GOLD.

For past generations tradition has decreed that the Indians in the old days of Kentucky buried a pot of gold on the farm of John Williams, over the Boyle line in Casey County. A few days ago Mr. Williams decided to start a systematic search for the treasure. His powerful team of mules he hitched to a strong plow, and in the locality where the gold is supposed to be hidden he began going into the earth. It has always been claimed that the pot is of gigantic proportions. After considerable deep plowing had been done and numerous excavations made, Mr. Williams' mules came to a sudden standstill when the plow struck an object that could not be moved.

So, certain he had found the traditional pot, he was overjoyed, and fainted. Passersby hurried to his assistance, and he was revived and told those present what he was seeking. An excavation was made and it was proved the plow had struck a huge rock. However, the search is being continued.

There are a number of farms in Boyle County upon which it is claimed large quantities of silver and gold are buried, relates the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. In most cases, it is believed, to have been hidden by misers or frightened people during war times. Not a few people have lost their lives by keeping their money in their homes, and attempting to hold it against the intrusion of robbers. That was one reason treasures were buried in other days.

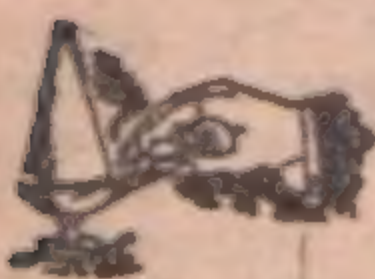
In this enlightened age, with burglar-proof banking facilities, people are not subject to these dangers. Some years ago some parties near Paint Lick in Garrard County in wrecking an old house found several thousand dollars which had been hidden during war times. The man who had hidden the money died without telling the secret.

CUFF BUTTONS.

Gold plated, bright finished, assorted shapes, set with fine brilliants. Price 10c postpaid.

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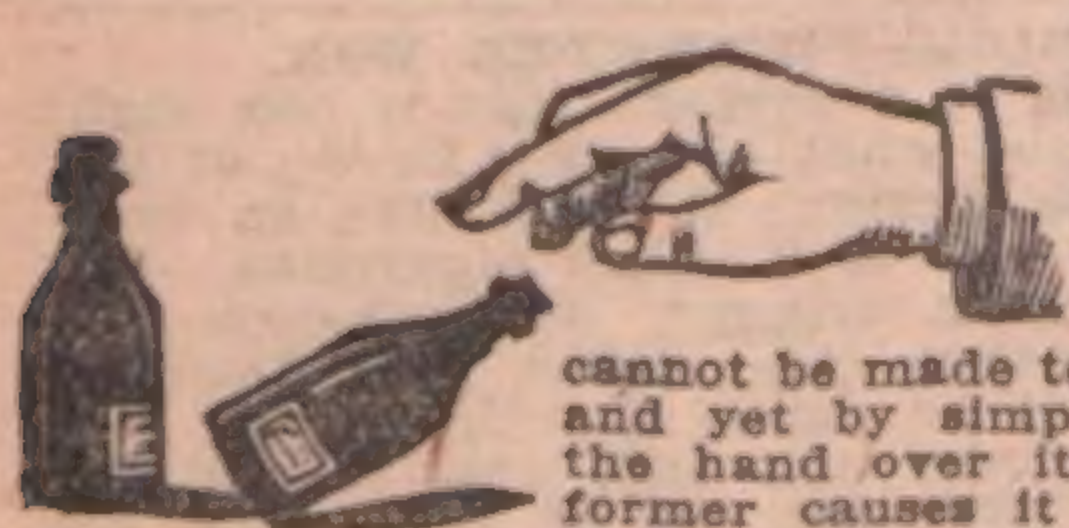
MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase.

Price, 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about.

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A very interesting little puzzle. It consists of a heavily nickeled plate and brass ring. The object is to get the ring from the side to the center and back. This is very hard, but we give directions making it easy. Price, 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

THE SPOTTER CARD TRICK.

The performer exhibits a die. The ace of spades and five cards are now taken from a pack. The ace of spades is thoroughly shuffled with the other cards, which are then placed down in a row on the table. The die is now thrown, and as if embodied with superhuman intelligence, the exact position of the Ace is indicated. Without touching the die, the performer picks up the cards, gives them a complete shuffle and again spreads them out. The die is rolled as before by any person, and is seen to come to a stop with the locating number uppermost. The card is turned over and found to correspond in position. Price, 15c. postpaid.

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"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Recommended very highly. Price, 10c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

NAIL PUZZLE.



Made of 2 metal nails linked together. Keeps folks guessing; easy to take them apart when you know how. Directions with every one.

Price, 6c., postpaid.

Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

THE BUCULO CIGAR.



The most remarkable trick-cigar in the world. It smokes without tobacco, and never gets smaller. Anyone can have a world of fun with it, especially if you smoke it in the presence of a person who dislikes the odor of tobacco. It looks exactly like a fine perfect, and the smoke is so real that it is bound to deceive the closest observer.

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With this joker in the lapel of your coat, you can make a dead shot every time. Complete with rubber ball and tubing. Price, 15c. by mail, postpaid.

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LAUGHABLE EGG TRICK.



This is the funniest trick ever exhibited and always produces roars of laughter. The performer says to the audience that he requires some eggs for one of his experiments. As no spectator carries any, he calls his assistant, taps him on top of the head, he gags, and an egg comes out of his mouth. This is repeated until six eggs are produced. It is an easy trick to perform, once you know how, and always makes a hit. Directions given for working it. Price, 25 cents by mail, postpaid.

H. F. Lang, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



THE DEVIL'S CARD TRICK.—From three cards held in the hand anyone is asked to mentally select one. All three cards are placed in a hat and the performer removes first the two that the audience did not select and passing the hat to them their card has mysteriously vanished. A great climax; highly recommended. Price, 10c.

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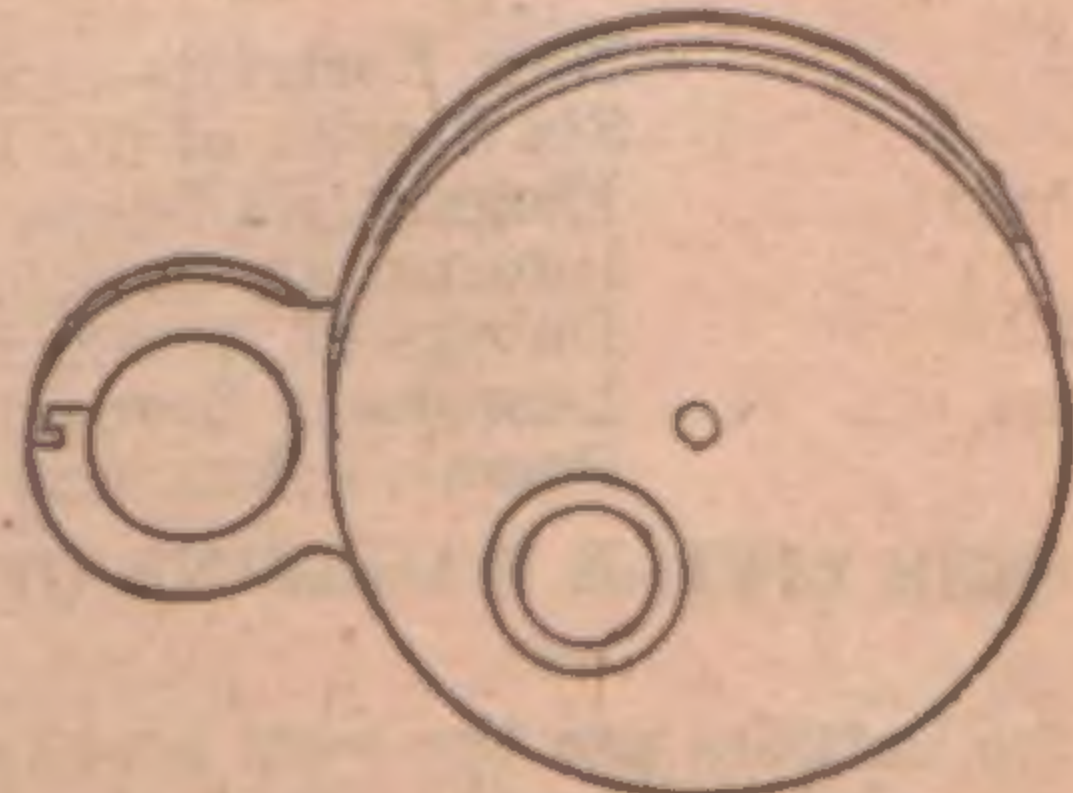
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The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

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MAGIC LOCK-CUTTER.



This clever little trick consists of a small nickeled padlock in the side of which there is a cigar cutter. The lock cannot be opened unless you know the secret. In opening it, a blade in the cutter clips your cigar. There is no keyhole. The fingers must open it.

Price 25 cts. each by mail, postpaid.

Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

FUNNY KISSING GAME.

These cards, from No. 1 to No. 16, run in rotation, but must be mixed and dealt, a white one for a boy and a red one for a girl. They are then read alternately, and the questions and answers make funny combinations. The right lady is rewarded with a kiss. A very funny game. Price, five cents a pack by mail.

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THE PRIZE FORD JOKE.



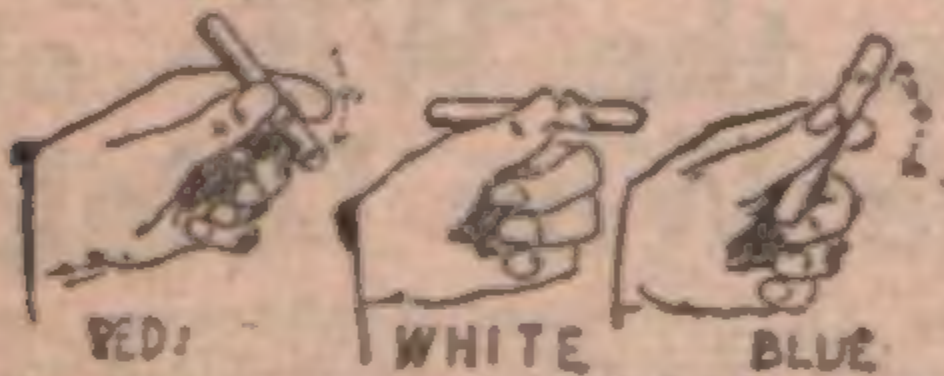
Looks like a story-book, but it contains a cap and a trigger. The moment your innocent friend opens the book to read the interesting story he expects—

Pop! Bang! The explosion is harmless, but will make him think the Germans are after him.

Price 25 cents each by mail, postpaid.

Wolff Novelty Co
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The working of this trick is very easy, most startling and mystifying. Give the case and three pencils to any one in your audience with instructions to place any pencil in the case point upward and to close case and put the remaining two pencils in his pocket. You now take the case with the pencil in it and can tell what color it is. Directions how to work the trick with each set.

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This toy is an exact imitation of the friendly little fellow who shares your bed, eats out of your hand or leg and who accepts your humble hospitality, even without an invitation. The fact that he also insists on introducing all his friends and family circle, sometimes makes him most unpopular with the ladies; most every woman you know would have seven kinds of fits if she saw two, or even one, of these imitations on her bedspread. Six are contained in a transparent envelope. Price, 10c. by mail.

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SOUVENIR SHOE THERMOMETER.

This is the prettiest and daintiest little article that we have ever seen. It consists of a miniature French shoe only 1 1/4 inches in length, to which is attached a perfect and thoroughly reliable thermometer. They are made in Paris by skilled workmen, and the workmanship in every detail is simply perfect.

Ladies sometimes use them to attach to embroidery work, and nothing could be more suitable to present to a lady friend as a memento. Besides being a practical thermometer it is a perfect work of art. Price, 8c.; 4 for 25c. postpaid.

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RUBBER SUCKER.



Rubber Vacuum Suckers

The latest novelty out! Dishes and plates will stick to the table, cups to the saucers like glue. Put one under a glass and then try to lift it. You can't. Lots of fun. Always put it on a smooth surface and wet the rubber. Many other tricks can be accomplished with this novelty.

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In each set there are ten pins and two bowling balls, packed in a beautifully ornamented box. With one of these miniature sets you can play ten-pins on your dining-room table just as well as the game can be played in a regular alley. Every game, known to professional bowlers can be worked with these pins. Price, 10c. per box by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE CREEPING MOUSE.

This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of a very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old. Price, ten cents by mail.

Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.

This one is a corker! Get a box right away, if you want to have a barrel of joy. Here's the secret: It looks like an ordinary red box of Turkish cigarettes. But it contains a trigger, under which you place a paper cap. Offer your friend a smoke and he raises the lid of the box. That explodes the cap, and if you are wise you will get out of sight with the box before he gets over thinking he was shot. Price 15c., postpaid.

Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

BINGO.

It is a little metal box. It looks very innocent, but is supplied with an ingenious mechanism which shoots off a harmless cap when it is opened. You can have more fun than a circus with this new trick. Place the BINGO in or under any other article and it will go off when the article is opened or removed. It can be used as a funny joke by being placed in a purse, cigarette box, or between the leaves of a magazine; also, under any movable article, such as a book, tray, dish, etc. The BINGO can also be used as a burglar alarm, as a theft preventer by being placed in a drawer, money till, or under a door or window or under any article that would be moved or disturbed should a theft be attempted. Price, 15c. each by mail, postpaid.

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